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The Game Commission's new logo, designed by Bob Sopchick, is featured on this month's cover. With a white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, Canada geese, bald eagle, beaver lodge, hemlock tree and mountain laurel sprig, the new logo signifies the agency's role as steward of our state's wildlife resources.

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1999-2000

Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report, 1999-2000

TO IMPROVE the agency's effectiveness and efficiency, in 1998 the Board of Game Commissioners asked the USFWS Management Assistance Team (MAT) to conduct a comprehensive review of the Game Commission.

Completed and presented to the agency in August 1999, the document listed eight primary recommendations, along with several strategies to assist in implementing the recommendations. Some feared that the Game Commission would sweep the MAT Report and its recommendations under the rug, but that is hardly the case.

A few months ago, the agency released an update report that offered a self-assessment of where the agency stands on implementing the MAT Report's recommendations.

This update demonstrates that the Game Commission is committed to using the MAT Report as a guide to making this agency the best wildlife agency in the nation. To emphasize this point, we posted the MAT Update Report on the agency's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

Don't take just our word for all that we've done; take a look at what others have said. A recent Legislative Budget and Finance Committee report noted: "We found that the PGC's Executive Director is using the MAT team's 'Recommendations for Improvement' in concert with a 'personal blueprint and vision' to reorient the agency. To date, the PGC has made substantial progress in many areas, and many other initiatives are in progress. Many of these accomplishments are consistent with the recommendations made by the MAT Team. As part of his effort, the PGC's Executive Director also plans to reexamine and strengthen the agency's Strategic Plan and strategic planning process. We found that the PGC is engaged in an agency-wide effort to improve the effectiveness of both its operations and management as well as its standing with the public and its various stakeholders."

STATE GAME LANDS 322, known as the Suppes Estate, exemplifies the agency's ongoing land acquisition program in that it was made possible through partnerships with private land conservancies and other government agencies. Land purchases this fiscal year were up \$1,229,913.



As the agency moves forward, we will continue to consult with MAT on ways to improve and enhance our services. The Game Commission's dedicated employees are the ones behind the change that has taken place, and with their continued support and commitment, we will accomplish much more.

Ultimately, the path of progress will take time. This is an important and pivotal point in the Game Commission's history, so we should not rush to change merely for the sake of change. We must take deliberate and sure-footed steps forward.

Public outreach is one of the key areas in which the Game Commission has made progress. Dr. Gary Alt, for example, held more than 50 public meetings to explain the

new direction in deer management, and he plans to hold public meetings within 50 miles of every Pennsylvanian this year. To educate the public and gather input on an elk hunt plan, the Game Commission held a series of eight open houses throughout the state. Rawley Cogan, the agency's elk biologist and chairman of the Elk Hunt Advisory Committee, also met with the House Game and Fisheries Committee to provide them with information they can share with their constituents.

The Game Commission is making greater use of e-mail and voice-mail to improve communication with the public. The agency's website has been expanded, and e-commerce will expand the public's access to our products. Toll-free telephone lines were reestablished in the six region offices. More news releases are being issued than ever before, and the list goes on.

Expect to see more from the Game Commission in the coming year. We are committed to making the Pennsylvania Game Commission the best wildlife agency in the nation. And, from the following pages of this annual report, you can see that we are well on our way.

Wildlife Management

The basic goal of our wildlife management program is to manage for healthy wildlife populations that are acceptable to Pennsylvanians and their communities. We survey and monitor wildlife populations, study the relationships between wildlife, habitat and humans and their communities, develop management plans, and apply the management tools of hunting, trapping, habitat management, enforcement, communications and education to achieve the balance between biological and social acceptability.

Goal: Manage wildlife populations at biologically and socially acceptable levels.

The creation in August 1999 of a Deer Management Section emphasized the commission's increased commitment to improving deer management and restoring confidence and credibility with the public. Dr. Gary Alt, was named to head the section, which also includes biologists Dr. George Kelly and Bret Wallingford.

In January 2000, the Board of Game Commissioners gave preliminary approval to a number of changes formulated to stabilize the growth of the deer herd. To explain these proposed changes, Dr. Alt attended more than 50 meetings in 34 counties and appeared on Pennsylvania Cable Network's Call-In statewide television program. In April 2000, the Board of Commissioners approved the proposed changes, which include:

- a 3-day statewide antlerless deer season that begins on a Saturday concurrent with the last day of the rifle antlered season;
- a 3-day October muzzleloader season for antlerless deer that begins on a Saturday;
- the ability to issue unsold antlerless deer licenses for use on private property, or public lands with an approved deer management plan;
- concurrent antlered/antlerless seasons for junior and senior hunters, and holders of disabled person permits to use a vehicle for hunting, with required licenses; and
- continuing the opportunity to harvest either an antlered or antlerless deer on Deer Damage Farm Areas.

In addition, language was adopted to ensure the agency's ability to extend the 3-day statewide antlerless season if there is a need. Approval also was given to allow the taking of more than one deer per day, but not at the same time. A harvested deer must be transported and secured at a vehicle, permanent or temporary camp, residence, deer



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processing facility, or a “pick-up” point before a second or subsequent deer may be taken. Based on the increased hunter efficiencies expected from the new seasons and bag limits, a recommended antlerless license allocation of 744,990, plus 85,750 for the six Special Regulation Area counties, was approved.

Modifications were made to deer damage programs to provide additional management tools to farmers and foresters. A rule change was approved in January 2000 to provide farmers enrolled in the deer control permit program one subpermit for every five acres under cultivation (doubling the rate from one subpermit for every 10 acres) and allowing subpermits to be issued to Resident Junior License holders. Farmers distribute subpermits to licensed hunters, entitling them to remove one deer per subpermit during the growing season when deer are actually damaging crops. Preliminary approval was also given to a proposed rule to give landowners enrolled in the commission’s forest cooperative programs the ability to provide hunters an opportunity to take deer that enter enclosure areas.

Two research projects were initiated this year. Because of our long-term deer harvest structure, we have a preponderance of 1.5-year-old males in our breeding population and an unbalanced adult sex ratio. We don’t know what effect that may be having on the timing and distribution of conception and fawning. From January to May each year, our WCOs collect reproductive information by examining roadkilled female deer. This year they measured embryos, so we could determine age-specific conception and fawning dates by deer management unit (county). To answer questions about predation and how it may be related to habitat quality, a 2-year fawn mortality study was initiated in May 2000. Cause-specific mortality is being evaluated on two areas, one in good quality habitat and the other in poor quality habitat. Ninety-eight fawns (52 in one area and 46 in the other) were radio-collared in May and June.

Scot Williamson of the Wildlife Management Institute presented the final report of the Deer Management Working Group at the January 2000 commission meeting. Created in 1998, this deer management stakeholder group met seven times to develop recommendations on ways to address the controversial and contentious issues that have polarized factions interested in deer and their management. Consensus recommendations forwarded to the Commissioners included:

- Citizen task forces or other stakeholder groups should be used to provide the PGC input on acceptable deer density targets.
- The PGC should instruct staff to accommodate and promote, whenever possible, the efforts by interested groups to improve deer management.
- The PGC should adopt the “Large Landowner Antlerless Deer Management Permit Program” proposal developed by the DMWG.
- The proposed deer management units currently being considered by the PGC are too large to control hunter harvest. Small units will better distribute hunter pressure.
- Deer management units may be harvest-, habitat- or culturally-based;
- New deer management units should be established as soon as possible, with major roads or distinct topographical features as boundaries.

In 1999, hunters harvested 378,592 deer. The antlered harvest was 194,368, up from 181,449 in 1998. The antlerless harvest was 184,224, down from 196,040 in 1998. Antlerless harvest is determined largely by the number of licenses sold. With a restriction again in 1999 of one antlerless license per hunter, except in Southwest Region

counties, we sold 647,908 of the 797,200 antlerless licenses allocated; down from the 661,196 we sold out of the same allocation in 1998. The success rate of antlerless hunters also dropped, resulting in a lower harvest and allowing the deer population to increase for the second consecutive year. 72,071 deer, 19 percent of the total harvest, were taken in the archery seasons; 292,572 deer — 77 percent — were taken during the firearms seasons; and 13,949 — 4 percent — were taken by muzzleloaders.

After the 1999-2000 hunting season, about 1,035,000 deer remained (39 deer per square mile of forested land), up from 902,000 in 1998 (34 deer per square mile), and 478,000 deer more than our statewide goal of 557,000 (21 deer per square mile). The 2000 preseason population of approximately 1,523,000 was 8.6 percent higher than the 1,402,000 projected for preseason 1999 and included 1.26 million antlerless deer.

The 1999 preseason black bear population was estimated at 11,986, up 2,084 or slightly more than 17 percent from 1998. This was the highest estimate since modern bear management began here in the 1970s. However, the percentage of tagged bears (the harvest rate) in 1999 was noticeably lower than previous years, suggesting that the 1999 estimate be used with caution. A low harvest rate implies that hunters killed only a small percentage of the available bears. If it was low due to other reasons, such as unequal vulnerability between tagged and untagged bears, the resulting population estimate would be inflated. This may have been the case, as the 1986-98 harvest rate averaged 21 percent, while in 1999 it dropped to 14.3 percent, the second lowest value ever recorded. Further study of harvest rates and how they can vary is in the works.

Despite the record-high preseason population estimate, the bear harvest in 1999 decreased by 33 percent, from 2,598 to 1,741. This was likely due to several factors. First, license sales decreased approximately 11 percent, possibly due to the price increase. Second, hunter success declined. During 1998, 1 in 44 hunters, or 2.3 percent, got a bear, compared to 1 in 59 or 1.7 percent in '99. Fall food shortages in some areas, particularly acorns, probably put more bears than usual in dens prior to hunting season, and foggy or warm weather made hunting the remaining bears tough.

Of the 1,741 bears taken in '99, almost equal numbers were male and female. Notably, one bear from the 1999 harvest was determined to be 22 years old. Scales were used to weigh 1,733 bears, with the males averaging 182 pounds and females 138. Most of these were field-dressed weights.

As a trial effort, computers were used at eight bear check stations. Problems were minimal, and 33 percent of all bears checked during 1999 were entered into one of these eight computers. This reduced the time needed to calculate harvest statistics and get this information out to the public. Check station computers also were equipped with a database of all known bear captures in Pennsylvania.



DR. FRANK BOSTICK and his veterinarian assistant ANGELA SCHERER examine a black bear injured in a highway accident. The bear, it turned out, had an injured shoulder and suffered a slight concussion, but was able to be released back into the wild, and at last report, it was doing fine.



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nia, allowing hunters with ear-tagged bears to receive a printout of their bear's history before leaving the check station. Fifty-two bears with Pennsylvania ear tags were processed at check stations with computers, and another 88 were inspected at the remaining 16 stations. We plan on using computers at all bear check stations during the 2000 season.

We trapped and translocated 18 elk (2 adult bulls, 6 adult cows, 1 yearling cow, 5 female calves and 4 male calves) to the New Garden property during February and March. The New Garden property is in West Keating Township, Clinton County. Approximately 70 elk have been translocated to expand Pennsylvania's elk range as well as increase the biodiversity of state forest lands, reduce elk densities in the traditional range and reduce conflicts — primarily agricultural damage — between elk and humans.

PGC employees also trapped and translocated 3 adult cows and 2 calves to the Quehanna Wild Area last winter. The elk were released without confining them in a holding pen as was done in past releases.

The annual elk survey during January and February indicated the population to be 566. The sex and age breakdown was 99 branched-antlered bulls, 52 spike bulls, 288 adult cows, 120 calves and 7 unknown. The estimate of 566 elk is the largest elk population thought to be in the state since the late 1920s.



PGC biologist BILL PALMER checks a woodcock trap. The Game Commission has been participating in a multi-state project designed to determine the effects of hunting on woodcock populations.

In September 1999, an Elk Hunt Advisory Committee was formed made up of representatives of the Game Commission, the legislature, sportsmen's organizations and others with interest in elk. The committee made recommendations to Director Ross in March 2000. The Elk Hunt Plan was posted on the PGC website in April 2000 and copies were mailed to more than 300 individuals and organizations. The committee asked for comments from various conservation, civic, sportsman, state agencies, and other groups during April. Following the comment period, the PGC scheduled a series of seven Elk Hunt Open Houses across Pennsylvania in June and July. Hundreds of comments were received, and at the public meetings overwhelming

support of the proposed elk hunt plan was consistent across Pennsylvania.

According to harvest estimates and summer turkey surveys, Pennsylvania's wild turkey populations peaked in 1995 and remained relatively stable but at slightly lower levels from 1996–1998. Warm winters during the past three years, an excellent mast crop in 1998, and warm dry spring in 1999 provided for the best summer recruitment on record. The statewide turkey population in 1999 may have been a new record, in excess of 300,000. However, we anticipate recruitment in 2000 was lower, because of exceptionally wet weather during the first hatch period.

Based on Game-Take survey results, hunters took 78,500 wild turkeys in Penn's Woods in 1999. The spring 1999 turkey harvest was 37,800 gobblers, and the fall harvest was 40,700 birds. A complete report of the 1999 spring and fall harvests appeared in the November 2000 *Game News*.

Since 1995 our statewide turkey harvests have been very substantial, indicating a continuing increase of our turkey populations. However, TMA 7B continues to show low harvest densities, indicating that this turkey population is declining. We recently completed the first year of a 2½-year project to study the factors limiting this wild turkey population. Objectives include determining turkey survival rates, causes of mortality, nest success, and habitat use. The PA Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation provided \$53,000 to help support this project.

Even though spring green-up was early in 2000, nesting on the study area did not begin early. Hens began incubating on April 27, the average date of incubation in Pennsylvania. During the first year of the study, 74 hens (40 adults, 34 juveniles) were radio-tagged, and approximately 51 percent died. Causes were mammalian predation (42 percent), legal harvest (18 percent, including 1 wounding loss), illegal harvest (3 percent), unknown causes (24 percent), and avian predation (13 percent). Of 50 hens alive at the beginning of nesting season, 32 incubated at least one nest (9 of 17 juveniles and 23 of 33 adults). Approximately 68 percent of radio-marked hens successfully hatched their nests, but poult survival was poor. Only 7 of the 16 hens (44 percent) had at least 1 poult alive at 4 weeks. We can only speculate, but daily rain just after our peak hatch is the most probable cause of the poor poult survival. Observations of young poults during late summer, indicated that even though second nesting attempts were late, poult survival of these late nests was good.

Numbers of grouse hunters for 1999-2000 dropped by 3 percent from the previous year. Harvest estimates showed that 174,500 hunters took 177,300 birds. Grouse hunter effort declined by 11 percent; however, harvest per hunter-day increased slightly, because of higher grouse populations. Grouse hunter cooperators recorded 11,500 hours of hunting, with an average grouse flushing rate of 1.49 flushes per hour, an increase of 17 percent, from 1.27 in 1998-99. This was the highest flushing rate since 1995-96.

Grouse populations on the Scotia habitat management area on SGL 176 in Centre County have been monitored since 1976 to measure responses to a 2.5-acre patch cutting program setup on a 40-year rotation. The managed area continues to carry more grouse than the unmanaged area. The population on the study area is increasing again, after a peak in 1994, which was followed by a sharp drop. The number of drumming grouse on the treated area in the spring of 2000 was the second highest recorded to date. The density of drummers in patches cut in 1985-88 (a drummer for every 6 acres) was the highest recorded for any patches in any year. Currently, 25 percent of the managed area is being cut, with about half of that accomplished the winter of 1999-2000 and the rest to be finished in spring. We have learned that drummers do not use areas for 5 to 7 years after cutting, and that it may take 12 years or more before the full potential of a cutting is realized. We do not yet know how long the effect of the cuttings will last. This information is important for making habitat recommendations for both public and private landowners interested in grouse management.

Waterfowl breeding pair surveys have been conducted annually in the Atlantic Flyway since 1989, and are designed to monitor trends in the northern half of the flyway. In 2000, 220 square kilometer plots were surveyed for waterfowl breeding pairs, and the estimated statewide breeding wood duck population was 43,300 pairs, down 26 percent from the record high count in 1999. Breeding mallard populations were down 38 percent from 1999, but similar to the 10-year average at 88,400. Both the number of Canada goose breeding pairs (85,400) and the total population estimate (225,500) declined from 1999, but were still well above the 10-year averages.

Preseason duck banding continued in cooperation with the Atlantic Flyway duck



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banding program. During 2000, more than 4,000 ducks were banded; these included 3,071 mallards, 55 black ducks and 813 wood ducks.

During June 2000, 2,521 Canada geese were banded throughout the state. The subsequent recoveries of these geese by hunters will allow us to further refine and evaluate existing resident goose seasons. These data, along with leg-band recoveries and morphological measurements of harvested birds, are used to determine the proportion of migrant geese in the harvest and to aid in developing possible expanded Canada goose hunting opportunities here. Thanks to this type of information, hunters are enjoying greatly expanded goose hunting opportunities

throughout most of the state.

Wintering tundra swans in the AF are being studied through a cooperative research effort involving North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Over the past two years more than 175 tundra swans were banded in Lancaster and Lebanon counties, to learn more about the migration routes, breeding areas and survival rates.

Research continued on the effects of hunting on local woodcock populations in north-western Pennsylvania. On several sites in Crawford and Erie counties, woodcock were

captured, and more than 200 were fitted with radio transmitters and monitored through the fall to estimate survival between hunted and non-hunted areas. Results from this 2-year study will provide much needed information on the role of hunting on our local woodcock. This study is part of a cooperative effort with the USFWS, the Biological Research Division of the USGS and the states of Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. More than \$43,500 was provided by the USFWS through a webless migratory game bird grant; an additional \$3,750 was provided by the Ruffed Grouse Society and \$1,000 by the Lehigh Valley Chapter of Safari Club International.



PGC biologist JOHN DUNN, right, and wildlife technician JACK GILBERT neck band a tundra swan at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area. Re-sightings of banded swans will be used to identify migration routes, breeding areas and determine survival rates.

After 30 years of season closure, we proposed a limited bobcat hunting and trap-

ping season during fall 2000. We estimated the current adult bobcat population at 3,500 animals and set a conservative harvest objective of 175, in furbearer management areas 2 and 3. A public drawing of 290 permit applicants was held in September 2000. This limited harvest opportunity will not have any impact on the continued growth and success of the bobcat in Pennsylvania.

During the 1999-2000 season, trappers caught 8,377 beavers. The annual beaver take has averaged more than 9,000 over the past five years. Our preseason statewide population estimate was 29,717 beavers, a slight increase over the previous year's estimate of 28,573. The more liberal bag limit in some counties, trapping device changes, and season length increase imposed two years ago has helped stabilize statewide beaver population growth. However, beaver occupancy of available habitat remains higher than our established goal of 25 percent. Based on WCO field surveys, preseason beaver occupancy of suitable habitat was 37 percent. Greater beaver harvest may be necessary to

reach prescribed management goals.

Four trapper/technician teams participated in a coyote trap-testing project during fall 1999. This is the second year that Pennsylvania has cooperated in the nationwide trap-testing program designed to test the efficiency, selectivity, practicality, and humaneness of three capture devices for coyotes. This year we evaluated # 3 Victor soft catch (padded jaw) traps, # 2 Bridger offset/laminated jaw traps, and Belisle foot snares. The Belisle foot snare is a new device developed in Canada. Each team trapped from 14-19 days, and despite unseasonably warm conditions, our four teams captured 35 coyotes, 15 red fox, 49 gray fox, 22 raccoons, 6 opossums and 3 skunks. Six bobcats were also captured and released. National project coordinators will summarize results from all cooperating states in the near future. Carcasses from animals captured in Pennsylvania were sent to labs in Wyoming and Georgia, where pathologists will assess injuries associated with each capture device.

Major gains and disappointing losses were experienced among Pennsylvania's birds of species concern in the past year. For the first year since 1990, no nesting loggerhead shrikes were found in Pennsylvania, but peregrine falcons and bald eagles continued to expand their nesting populations.

The growth in the bald eagle's nesting population has been nothing short of spectacular. The number of nesting pairs jumped 100 percent between 1997 and 2000. Actually, the rate of growth has been improving, since the 1970s, when just two pairs hung on, to the late 1980s when young from the reintroduction program were coming into the nesting population, through the late 1990s when wild nesting eagles were producing more and more young each year. The growth in nesting eagles has occurred nationwide, adding eagles to the list of wildlife, such as peregrine falcons and American alligators, that have been pulled from a precipitous path toward extinction and been returned to their place in the natural order. This year, 48 eagle nests were documented and more than 56 young were produced in Pennsylvania. New nests were discovered in Cameron, Crawford, Pike and Venango counties.

Peregrine falcons have followed a similar course. Peregrines were removed from the federal Endangered Species list in 1999, although their recovery in Pennsylvania has not been as dramatic as that of the bald eagle. Ten nest sites were documented in 2000, including a celebrated pair on the Rachel Carson State Office Building in Harrisburg. (See the December 2000 *Game News*.) All of Pennsylvania's pairs are still on buildings. Still, at least 18 young peregrines were produced in 2000 and a slow but steady growth in the population provides evidence of this species' recovery.

Several projects this year again focused on grassland birds. Statewide surveys completed by volunteers documented the more common species, but also successfully detected the small invasion of dickcissels. Nearly as many were counted on grassland routes in 2000 as had been



Thanks to PennDOT's DICK SNYDER, the Mercer County Food & Cover crew was able to erect an osprey nesting platform on a 30-foot pole at SGL 284.



1999 - 2000

counted in all of the previous years since 1989. The species had been reported, at an average of about four birds per year, during most of the previous 10 years. Dickcissels are considered “eruptive,” in this case meaning when birds from the large Midwestern population occasionally show up elsewhere — such as Pennsylvania. Sedge wren and upland sandpiper — other state-threatened birds — were also counted by this long-term project.

Golden-winged warbler, black-crowned night-heron and osprey are among the array of birds surveyed by Wildlife Diversity projects in 2000.

Prominent among these efforts was the first-ever, statewide assessment of saw-whet owl populations. The initial reports suggest that the survey was successful in detecting scores of saw-whets, as well as other owl species and whip-poor-wills. About 40 percent of routes detected saw-whet owls. The secretive saw-whet, symbol of the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, was reported during the nesting season across the northern tier counties, but also south to Somerset and Adams counties and at other, scattered locations across the state.

Pennsylvania’s bats are a valuable natural resource, yet in the past as we changed the landscape, little consideration was given to the needs of bats. Today, however, there are demands on resource agencies, as well as on individuals, for bat awareness.

Each year the Pennsylvania Bat Conservation and Management Workshop is hosted by Bat Conservation International, the Game Commission and DCNR’s Bureau of State Parks. Located in Huntingdon and Blair counties, the workshop provides participants with intensive hands-on training in techniques used in working with bats. Eighteen participants completed the workshop in 1999. Attendees included biologists, students and a veterinarian. The most distant traveler was a student from Taiwan, the Republic

of China. The curriculum and field trips focus on Wildlife Diversity Section projects and cooperative efforts with the Bureau of State Parks. Topics include bat identification, capture techniques, habitat needs, artificial roosts, public education and problem solving. Through

1999-00 Pheasant Releases

	Hens	Cocks
September/October releases	19,789	0
Fall hunting season releases	63,154	119,542
Late season releases	6,527	1
Spring breeders	17,436	1,525

the efforts of this cooperative venture, bat conservation and management strategies are being implemented more often, and the once misunderstood bat is now considered one of the commonwealth’s natural treasures.

Our Pheasant Propagation Program continues to provide a top quality pheasant for recreational hunting. As a result of the pheasant band study conducted during 1998-99 (see July 2000 *Game News*), the number of hen pheasants released for dog training purposes in September was reduced 56 percent. Those birds were incorporated into the regular season release, increasing the percentage of birds available to harvest, thus reducing the cost-per-bird. Furthermore, the release of hens in the northern regions was moved back to mid-October, to help assure that more of these birds would be available for the opening day of small game season.

During 1999-2000, the game farms distributed 242,789 pheasants on lands open to public hunting. Sportsmen’s organizations that participate in the day-old chick program were provided 4,085 chicks to raise and release. High schools and other organizations

conducting embryology projects were provided 1,108 pheasant eggs and 730 chicks. A total of 10,000 surplus day-old hen chicks and 13,600 surplus eggs were sold for a total of \$11,120.00, which was deposited in the Game Fund.

For the second straight year, public tours of our four game farms were held in September, to provide people an opportunity to learn more about our pheasant propagation program. More than 600 attended demonstration sites, which included pheasant breeder pens, hatchery, brooder house, and observation of birds in rearing and grow-out pens.

Wildlife Habitat Management

Human activities and natural processes have altered habitat quality in many areas, to the detriment of many publicly preferred wildlife species. The protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats work to ensure viable populations of all wildlife. We need to develop and implement habitat programs and projects that recognize the life requirements of desirable species on a landscape scale, regardless of land ownership, to improve conditions for wildlife and ensure their long-term health.

Goal: Manage and improve wildlife habitats on public and private lands to sustain viable wildlife populations.

On April 13, 2000, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture (USDA) approved the Pennsylvania Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Governor Ridge had approved the program on January 30. CREP is designed to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and increase farm income on 100,000 acres of marginal farmland. Lasting for 10-15 years, this program targets highly erodible cropland and buffers within 180 feet of streams. Landowners in 20 southcentral and southeast counties will receive annual rental payments from the USDA. Payments will average \$100 per acre and range from \$56 to \$200 per acre, depending on soil characteristics. Additional bonus payments and cost sharing are available for implementing certain practices. If successful, the program may be expanded to other portions of Pennsylvania.

The program is funded at \$210 million; \$150 million will come from new federal dollars, state and non-profit organizations will contribute the rest. The Game Commission has committed \$8 million over the next 10 years. This includes funding for writing conservation plans, purchas-



Teresa Crerand

LMO JOHN SHUTKUFSKI, right, received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from the Pike County Conservation District, represented here by Chairman ROBIN WILDERMUTH, for his work in helping landowners develop wildlife habitat on their properties.



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ing warmseason grass drills, monitoring wildlife populations and developing an outreach program.

The Game Commission entered into a cooperative agreement with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in October 1999 and hired nine wildlife habitat biologists to help deliver the CREP Program to interested landowners. These biologists will be determining land eligibility and writing conservation plans. In addition, the PGC will be monitoring targeted wildlife populations in the CREP counties, to see if the habitat improvements are helping wildlife.

On June 1, 2000, landowners began signing up for CREP in Pennsylvania. The sign-up will continue until 100,000 acres is enrolled. Interest in this program has been very high, with more than 20,000 acres offered for enrollment by 620 landowners within the first two months. CREP will engage large numbers of landowners in conservation. This coordinated farmland habitat improvement effort is our best chance in 30 years to restore declining farmland wildlife populations.

In this fiscal year, the commission acquired 5,648 acres, bringing the total state game land acreage to 1,397,960. We now have 294 separate tracts in 65 counties. For game lands, the agency paid \$1,678,933, in three equal payments to the county, school district and township where game lands are located.

Statewide, food and cover corps and land managers planted 3,073 acres of grain and 1,594 acres of grasses and legumes for wildlife; 893 acres were planted in or converted to warm season grasses. About 6,119 acres of wildlife food plots were limed and fertilized to improve wildlife food production; 16,682 acres were mowed to maintain high quality grasses and legumes; and 1,068 acres of field borders were cut to provide nesting and escape cover. Also, 16,245 trees were pruned to improve fruit and seed production; 20 miles of roads were constructed and, finally, 1,419 new nest boxes and 491 waterfowl nest structures were erected.

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, through the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps (PCC), provided \$216,000 and eight work crews to assist with habitat projects such as planting seedlings and warm season grasses and erecting streambank fencing. These crews also constructed storage buildings, painted and made repairs to Food and Cover Corps headquarters, constructed and installed gates and painted and maintained game lands boundary lines.



LMO JOHN DZEMYAN takes the Lawrence County Conservation Class on a tour of SGL 44, where he presents a program on wildlife habitat/deer browsing.

The agency's nursery produced 2,599,250 seedlings (29 species) for planting on game lands and public access lands. The wood shop produced 4,909 bluebird boxes, 23,432 bluebird box kits, 874 wood duck boxes and hundreds of squirrel, kestrel, barn owl and bat boxes requested by land managers for placement on game lands.

To maintain optimum habitat diversity on our forested game lands, 6,492 acres were scheduled for commercial timber cutting operations. To enhance regeneration, another 868

acres were treated with herbicide to remove ferns, striped maple, spicebush and low quality beech brush hampering more beneficial species. Our Upland Vegetation Management machines were used to treat 308 acres by cutting and shearing advanced growth of woody vegetation, so it could revert to an earlier successional, low ground cover stage.

Commercial timber sales on 7,750 acres produced revenues of \$16,189,244, an increase of \$1,900,316 from the previous year. These activities yielded more than 22.4 million board feet of logs and 144,400 tons of pulpwood.

A road network sufficient to carry the heavy equipment and comply with the Clean Streams Act and other environmental protection regulations was designed and supervised by our forestry staff. Logging contractors completed 79 timber sale contracts during the year, improved 79 miles of haul roads, constructed 11.9 miles of new roads (which became wildlife food strips after seeding) and placed 203 culverts.

Wildlife Habitat Protection

A comprehensive habitat management program also provides environmental protection and monitoring to assure that habitat degradation is alleviated, reduced and mitigated. Traditionally, environmental protection has focused on air, water and soil quality. Although these concerns are essential, wildlife and habitat values should be incorporated in environmental protection. The commission strives for recognition of wildlife and its habitat as a valuable natural resource, just like air, water and soil.

Goal: Ensure wildlife habitat values are considered in the decision making procedures involving alterations to the environment.

The Roadsides for Wildlife initiative spearheaded by the Environmental Planning and Habitat Protection Division, continues to expand with the planting of two demonstration areas. The Sideling Hill service plaza along the Pennsylvania Turnpike in Fulton County and part of the interchange area for I-99 and Route 22 at Hollidaysburg in Blair County were planted in the spring of 2000. The warm season grasses (switchgrass, Indiangrass, and big bluestem) and forbs (broad-leaved flowering plants) are developing into a diverse grassland habitat that will benefit numerous songbirds and



For coming in first in all three age categories (perhaps the first time that's happened) the Everett High School's Envirothon team was presented with a Game Commission fine art print. Representative DICK HESS, in the suit, holding the print, participated in the presentation ceremony.



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Land Access

Cooperative agreements with public and private landowners permit the commission to secure land for recreation and develop a network of conservation oriented individuals who participate in other habitat management projects. We intend to continue diligent efforts to encourage public and private interests to incorporate public hunting and conservation projects in their land use plans.

Goal: Provide access to public and private lands for public hunting, trapping and other wildlife related recreational activities.

A new Farm-Game project, Farm-Game Project 241, was established in northeastern Clarion County, bringing to 187 the number of projects in the state. A farm game project consists of contiguous farms/properties totaling at least 1,000 acres. Farm-Game projects are located in 59 counties and consist of 21,546 agreements with landowners keeping more than 2.4 million acres open to hunting. The Safety Zone Program, comprised of properties at least 50 acres, currently has more than 1.4 million acres of land enrolled with 8,824 agreements with private landowners.

The Forest Game Program was established in 1971 for single landowners with 1,000 or more acres. Pressure for fee leasing in the private sector is a constant challenge in keeping private lands open to public hunting. During fiscal year 1999, 70 landowners agreed to allow hunting on 646,358 acres. All total, we have 30,440 private landowners enrolled in these three public access programs keeping 4,526,776 acres open to hunting.

Each cooperator receives a *Game News* subscription. More than a million tree and shrub seedlings were distributed to cooperators who requested them. Other benefits include wildlife food and cover seed mixture for planting, increased law enforcement protection, informational signs, technical guidance on wildlife conservation practices and, depending on funding and personnel constraints, assistance to develop wildlife habitat on their properties. More than 1,200 acres of warm season grasses were planted on these private lands with assistance from the Game Commission; 332 acres of woodland border edges were cut and 1,545 fruit producing trees were pruned or released to increase fruit production for wildlife.

Hunters have a vital role in keeping these cooperative public access programs viable. The commission expects hunters and trappers to ask permission, and be honest, ethical and respectful when on these private lands. Common sense, courtesy and good judgment should always accompany hunters and trappers when afield.

Five state game lands (252, 127, 230, 275 and 190) were inspected to determine if the properties conveyed to the Game Commission by the federal government for wildlife conservation are being used in compliance with the terms of the conveyances. (Properties are normally inspected every five years.) Based on the inspections, the Game Commission is in full compliance.

Federal/State Coordination

Multiple uses of state game lands, including the development of hiking trails, are fully encouraged when they are compatible with wildlife and the agency's management programs. Through this division, the following trail projects were coordinated or reviewed:

The establishment of the North Country National Scenic Trail on SGL 95 in Butler County, SGL 283 in Clarion County, SGL 148 in Lawrence County and SGL 285 in Beaver County. (This trail is one of the national trails under the National Trails System, and is the country's longest National Scenic Trail.); the extension of the Mid State Trail through SGL 73 in Bedford County, the relocation of the Link Trail on SGL 112 in Huntingdon County; the relocation of the Darlington Trail on SGL 170 in Cumberland and Perry counties; the extension of the Kunes Camp Trail on SGL 34 in Clearfield County; and the relocation of a section of the Quehanna Trail on SGL 94 in Clearfield County.

Facility Management

The Game Commission owns and maintains many buildings, dams, shooting ranges and other structures. During the year, steps were taken to update the inventories of all commission owned buildings and dams, and to place this information on electronic databases. Two summer engineering interns were employed to conduct field inspections of new dams built by the commission or those acquired during the past 10 years. The commission owns more than 1,000 water impoundments. Of this total, approximately 300 fall under jurisdiction of Department of Environmental Protection's Chapter 105 regulations. As such, regular maintenance inspections will be developed to ensure the safety and function of these structures. This will include the annual inspection of the agency's 11 high hazard dams by a registered professional engineer.

The electronic databases, and regular building and dam inspections, will serve as a guide to the development of a maintenance repair and replacement program. This will allow the commission to establish a priority list of needed repairs/replacements and to prepare future budgets accordingly.

Communications and Education

The effective communication of knowledge and information is essential for a public conservation agency. Over the years, the commission has developed many programs to inform people about the value of wildlife and commission activities. Increasing this knowledge and appreciation for wildlife can be accomplished only through an effective education and communications effort.

Goal: Create and enhance public awareness, understanding and appreciation for the commonwealth's wildlife resources, their management, related recreational opportunities, and for the commission's programs and related services.



To promote the Lakeland High School's first Hunter-Trapper Education course, the school's Advanced Wood Class made and erected a nice sign. Perhaps with the sign's help, the course was taken by 134 students.



1999 - 2000

In the 1999 calendar year 899 HTE courses were held, with 39,224 students attending — an eight percent increase from the previous year. The ranks of HTE instructors also grew, and now we have 3,015.

Beginning in January 2000, the Game Commission began offering a voluntary training course for hunters interested in learning more about bowhunting and improving their skills, and those who need certification to bowhunt in another state or province. Setting up this course, we adopted the National Bowhunter Education Foundation course. It is conducted over two or more days and is 10 to 12 hours. It includes at least five hours of classroom study and at least three hours of field experience.

We hope to eventually have 150 certified instructors who can conduct 100 classes at 50 course locations and teach 2,000 students.

This year 1,271 educators participated in Project WILD workshops throughout the state. These workshops were conducted by commission personnel and volunteer facilitators. A basic Project WILD workshop is at least six hours. In continuing efforts to expand conservation education, the commission received two grants from Project WILD National. With these grants, PA Project WILD piloted *Science and Civics: Sustaining Wildlife*, and new Project WILD materials for high school teachers and students. Project WILD urban initiatives were also continued in Philadelphia and Reading school districts.

Eighteen schools and community youth groups were awarded WILD ACTION Grants to improve habitat for wildlife on school and community grounds. Projects ranged from developing a bird and butterfly garden in Philadelphia to enhancing a lakeside area for wildlife education in the northwestern part of the state. The Game Commission, Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, the Mellon Foundation, the Wild Turkey Federation and Pheasants Forever provided funding for these grants.

Game News remains a primary voice of the Game Commission, and over the past year more news than ever before has been published in the magazine. The LMO Diary by Land Management Officer Brad Myers premiered in the April '99 issue and gives a detailed month-by-month account of how game lands and public access program lands are managed for wildlife.



Deputy WCO ALEX GERGAR put on a hands-on program about the furbearing animals for Cub Scout Pack 102 in Bangor. Alex explained habitats, tracks, diets and other aspects of each of the furbearers.

Game News contributors received several awards during the past year. In the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, Gerry Putt won the Best Published Color Art Award for his painting of a gobbler that graced the cover of the May '99 issue, and the Best Published Black and White Art Award for an illustration of a chickadee he did for the July '99 "The Naturalist's Eye." Bob Sopchick captured the Pennsylvania Deer Award for his "Home From The Hill" in the

November '99 Game News.

Other publications produced were a coloring book illustrated by Bob Sopchick, and two in a series of six brochures, "Hunting in the Northeast Region" and "Hunting in the Northcentral Region."

Law Enforcement

A wildlife conservation agency establishes rules to conserve and protect wildlife, habitat and the public's use of these resources. An effective law enforcement program is an essential component of wildlife conservation. The commission intends to fulfill its legislative mandate and commitment to the public and the wildlife resources through an effective law enforcement program.

Goal: Protect the wildlife resources of the commonwealth, and ensure the safe and responsible use of these resources through the fair and equitable enforcement of wildlife laws.

With a full complement of WCOs in the field, along with approximately 650 deputies, our field personnel successfully prosecuted 6,299 cases during the calendar year 1999. During the same period, 8,973 warnings were issued. Penalties assessed totaled \$1,129,035, for an average of \$179.24 per case.

For the first time in agency history, 205 first-time offenders arrested for hunting wildlife with bait or enticement were fined but did not lose their hunting privileges. Instead, each was sent a written warning that should they violate this law again, their hunting and trapping privileges will be revoked. As a result of major violations committed in 1999, 802 persons lost their privileges to hunt and trap in Pennsylvania.

Plans on outfitting all commissioned officers with new winter uniform coats were completed, and we started upgrading several other pieces of uniform clothing and equipment.

During the year, 31 persons lost their hunting and furtaking privileges because of failure to respond to citations, and 287 had their privileges revoked for failing to pay their penalty in full within the required 180 days. Following notification to these individuals, 242 met their obligations and their privileges were restored.

Deer and elk deterrent fencing continues to be used by those individuals commercially engaged in general farming, orchards, nurseries, and truck farming. Individuals experiencing significant crop losses due to deer or elk can contact their local WCO for program details. During the year, \$1,393 was expended from the Game Fund to supply and erect seven bear deterrent fences to qualified beekeepers. An additional \$15,621.92 was spent to pay 57 claims for bear damage to bees, livestock and poultry.

Personnel continue to review and process a growing number of permit applications. Special permits are issued to qualified persons for a wide range of activities, including regulated hunting grounds, bird banding, endangered species, taxidermy, commercial wildlife pest control. This program increased by more than 5,000 permits last year, making a total of more than 33,000 permits on active status in 33 different categories. Although these permits generated more than \$378,000, the agency does not recoup all its administrative costs under the current fee schedule. In addition to streamlining regulations and processing procedures, the bureau has submitted increased fee amounts for many permits to the General Assembly for consideration.



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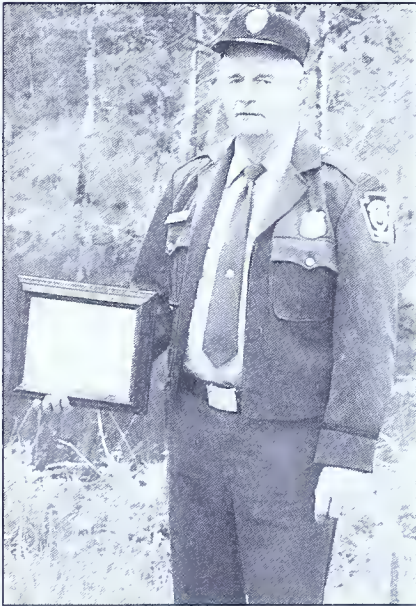
Human Resources

The commission recognizes our employees and volunteers are the agency's most valuable resource. To carry out an effective wildlife management program, we must address the needs of recruiting, training, placing and maintaining a competent and effective work force that will best meet the goals and objectives of our organization and the public we serve. As we meet these goals and objectives, we will provide equal employment opportunity and diversity in the workplace.

Goal: Recruit and develop a competent and effective workforce to protect and manage the commonwealth's wildlife resources.

The WCO Training Coordinator position was moved to the Bureau of Law Enforcement, and much was accomplished through this reassignment. An annual officer survival skills training plan was developed, covering verbal communication skills training, defensive tactics training, daylight survival firearms training and qualification, dim light and stress and judgement firearms training, and foul weather training and qualifications.

A legal updates course relating to conservation officer statutory authority and recent case decisions from Pennsylvania courts was completed and presented through the region offices.



Deputy TOM STROUP, Warren County, has been inducted into the PA Wild Turkey Hunter's Hall of Fame, in recognition of his many years of dedicated service to the management of wild turkeys. A deputy for 36 years, Tom is also an active Hunter-Trapper Education instructor.

A highlight this year was the graduation of the 25th class of conservation officers in March.

A deputy wildlife conservation officer in-residence training curriculum was revised and expanded to comply with the approved DWCO review recommendations, and two deputy wildlife conservation officer in-residence training programs were held for 42 DWCO candidates. In addition, a self-study extension course deputy candidates must complete prior to being commissioned was developed.

The DWCO certification exam, consisting of questions pertaining to all aspects of agency functions, was developed — as required by the approved DWCO review recommendations — and 38 DWCO candidates (91 percent) successfully passed the exam.

Revised and expanded the structured on-the-job training program that deputy wildlife conservation officers complete during their first year of service with their district wildlife conservation officer.

Designed, produced and distributed six deputy wildlife conservation officer training modules for use by district wildlife conservation officers at in-

service deputy training meetings. The six modules consisted of: Hunting under the influence enforcement and field sobriety testing; Courtroom procedures and principles of testifying; Crime scene investigation and evidence processing; Law enforcement ethics; Deer management principles and Dr. Gary Alt's presentation; Law enforcement administrative directive review and update.

An FBI computer program to provide interactive interview and interrogation training was obtained as an optional elective training course.

A 3-day intensive firearms workshop on advanced training techniques and methodology was given to 40 PGC firearms instructors, and another 3-day defensive tactics instructor workshop was given to provide advanced instructor training and a use of force legal update.

A new steel plate competition course was set up as an additional course of fire at the state revolver championship held at Scotia range.

Coordinated the on-going collection of data at bear check stations to be used in forensics training courses on estimating the time of death of black bears.

Revised the law enforcement training program for WCO Trainees at the Ross Leffler School of Conservation.

Six WCOs were sent to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation's Law Enforcement training academy for an advanced course on ATV operation for enforcement officers.

Finally, a Hunting Related Shooting Incident and a Wildlife Forensic Instructor-Specialist training program was developed and presented to 12 WCOs who will, in turn, provide a regional resource for local training and enhanced evidence recovery of high priority crime scenes with specialized equipment.

Administrative Services

The business of wildlife management in the private sector must be operated as efficiently and effectively as possible. We will continue to develop an up-to-date financial management system that is compatible with state government mandates and procedures and best business practices.

Goal: Provide fiscal responsibility and financial accountability for the agency and help all employees and volunteers perform their duties efficiently and effectively.

Continue to administer the Commonwealth Purchasing Card Program for adherence to procurement protocol and established procedures and guidelines, and to administer agency procurement/contracting function, provide training, and implement procedures necessary to ensure agency compliance to commonwealth policy and procedures.

The commission's use of assigned fleet vehicles is continually monitored, to ensure minimum vehicle numbers while maintaining efficient operations, and we continue to manage the agency-wide participation in the commonwealth's Electric Deregulation Program, which has resulted in a cost saving for our agency.

In October 1999, all agency Advancement Accounts were replaced with the VIPS (Vendor Information Payment System) Program. The system permits payments to be made to vendors for purchases of \$1,500 or less. Neither the computers housing agency Advancement Account Systems nor the check writers used to issue checks were Year-



1999 - 2000

2000 compliant; therefore, another method of payment for those vendors not accepting the Visa Purchase Card need to be implemented. The VIPS Program developed through Comptroller Operations has been implemented and has proven to be very successful. This Division conducts a review and audit of all agency invoices processed through VIPS.

The e-commerce website was implemented last fall, permitting hunting licenses to be purchased electronically. The agency is currently in the process of developing and implementing procedures necessary to meet the needs for fulfillment of these orders and provide financial accountability.

Licensing

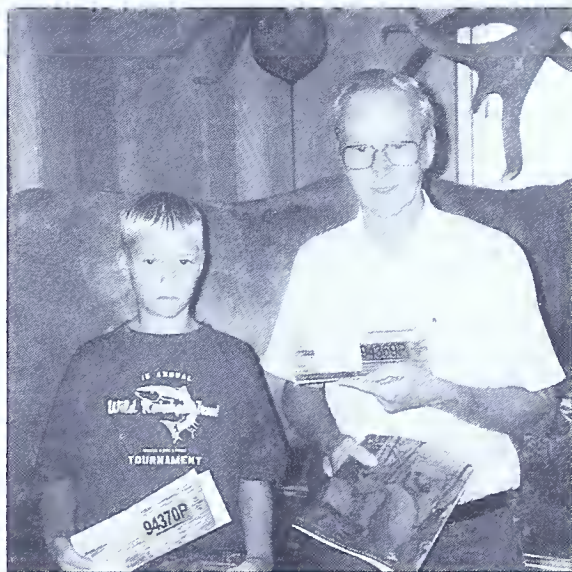
The modern day conservation movement originated with license buyers and the money they paid for those privileges. The licensing of hunters and trappers provides approximately 50 percent of the agency's operating income. Additionally, licensing allows the agency to evaluate and control management programs and monitor public participation.

Goal: Promote cost effective and progressive licensing systems while maintaining simplicity and responsiveness to the license buyer.

The 1999-00 hunting season marked the first license fee increase in 14 years. In addition, several new license types were created, offering new and expanded opportunities for sportsmen and sportswomen. Combination license categories were introduced for junior license applicants, both resident and nonresident. In addition, a combination

license was created for resident senior lifetime license applicants. Lifetime license holders (hunting or furtaker) are given the opportunity to upgrade to the combination license at the reduced cost of \$51. Combination licenses offer hunting, furtaker, archery and muzzleloader privileges all in convenient and reasonably priced packages.

In addition to these improvements, the commission relaxed the muzzleloader license regulations. The deadline for purchase was extended to August 31, giving applicants an additional month to acquire a license. To expand opportunities even further, muzzleloader license applicants are no longer required to forfeit their antlerless deer license application. This gives them the chance to apply for antlerless deer licenses at the same time as other hunters.



DONALD WILVER, right, and his grandson MICHAEL WILVER purchased their 2000-01 hunting licenses at the Northcentral Region Office. Donald purchased his first senior lifetime license, and Michael got his first junior license.

Information Technology

The Game Commission has a strong commitment to information technology and recognizes the tremendous benefits of innovative, technological solutions to information management. This program area services all commission programs and provides a backbone for communication, data analysis, financial operations, statistical analysis, and a variety of other functions essential to operate our agency.

Goal: Provide the latest advances in information technology for solutions to program objectives.

The 21st century is here and our computer systems have survived. Was the Y2K threat all hype? We truly didn't think so. Without the two years of preparation and then having staff working literally around the clock on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, we would have had significant difficulties with this dramatic change.

A prime example of our entry into the "Information Age" is the outfitting of all wildlife conservation officers with personal computers. Admittedly, some were more receptive than others, but they all have begun using electronic mail, the Internet, word processing and spreadsheets. Electronic transmission of agency news releases and legislative updates is particularly useful.

Data Center Consolidation has been looming throughout commonwealth agencies for quite some time. To evaluate our participation in this effort, we performed a study with the Gartner Group Consulting firm. The study included a comprehensive analysis of our computer operations and a comparison of the services being offered in the data center consolidation. In a nutshell, the study concluded that the Game Commission would benefit from the additional computer operations services being offered by the consolidation effort.

Our decision to enter into the data center consolidation project occurred this past spring. The transition effort began June 1, and after three months of feverish work, the transition to the Office of Administration's data center was completed on August 19.

The following licenses were issued for the 1999 — 2000 license year:

Resident Adult	777,172
Resident Junior	62,586
Resident Junior Combination	35,617
Resident Senior	43,759
Resident Landowner	1,826
Nonresident Adult	63,830
Nonresident Junior	2,094
Nonresident Junior Combination	582
Nonresident 7-Day	3,262
Resident Archery	263,377
Nonresident Archery	13,245
Resident Muzzleloader	101,672
Nonresident Muzzleloader	4,418
Resident Migratory Game Bird License	115,252
Nonresident Migratory Game Bird License	4,579
Resident Antlerless Deer	718,670
Nonresident Antlerless Deer	22,163
Resident Adult Furtaker	16,110
Resident Junior Furtaker	499
Resident Senior Furtaker	803
Nonresident Adult Furtaker	179
Nonresident Junior Furtaker	11
Resident Bear	99,520
Nonresident Bear	2,384
Senior Lifetime Hunting	3,529
Senior Lifetime Combination	2,158
Senior Lifetime Combination (Upgrades)	3,371
Senior Lifetime Renewal Hunting	33,529
Senior Lifetime Furtaker	2

Total Revenue Generated: \$34,855,226



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We feel this large data center will offer many improved services. First, operations run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This means that PGC personnel can access information almost anytime. The mainframe computer system, which we share with the Public Utility Commission, is the latest technology and is much faster. Security is more encompassing and environmental controls have complete redundancy. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, highly skilled technical support staff from UNISYS Corporation provide a local presence for mainframe software support.

The Bureau of Automated Technology Services has been directly involved in the agency's development of e-commerce. The sale of hunting and furtaker licenses over the Internet, along with *Game News* subscriptions and other products, is a service we've been working hard to develop.

The license sales portion of the site was implemented last fall, to be followed by the magazine and commodity sales in winter. To develop the site the Game Commission and the Fish and Boat Commission partnered with the Office of Administration to supply the hardware on which the system will run; PennDOT will validate residency through their drivers license database; and SurePay will validate and charge credit card transactions.

PGC FINANCIAL REPORT

Ross E. Starner, Comptroller

July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000

The Balance Sheet and the Statement of Unreserved Fund Balance were prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). The unreserved/undesignated balance in the Game Fund on June 30, 2000, computed on a GAAP basis, was \$27,983,827 an increase of \$3,207,056 or 12.94 percent from June 30, 1999. Fiscal year 1999-00 revenue earned and prior year lapses exceeded expenditures, resulting in the increase in the Game Fund balance.

Total fixed assets reported by the Game Commission as of June 30, 2000, were \$96,087,378. Fixed assets are reported at cost or estimated historical cost; no depreciation is provided. Donated fixed assets are recorded at fair market value at the time of donation.

All other schedules included in this report were prepared on a cash basis combined with an encumbrance budgetary system, and as such are consistent with that of the previous year. Actual revenue collected and credited to the Game Fund during the 1999-00 fiscal year was \$64,798,087, an increase of \$12,983,188 or 25.06 percent over the previous year's actual cash receipts. This was primarily due to an increase in licenses and fees that went into effect on July 1, 1999, in accordance with Act 166 of 1998. In addition, wood products sales increased by \$1,900,316 or 13.3 percent. The Game Commission has been receiving favorable market prices for the timber harvested. Interest on securities and deposits increased by \$264,467 or 14.35 percent, mainly due to the increase in the fund balance.

Actual current year operating expenditures and commitments totaled \$62,936,856,

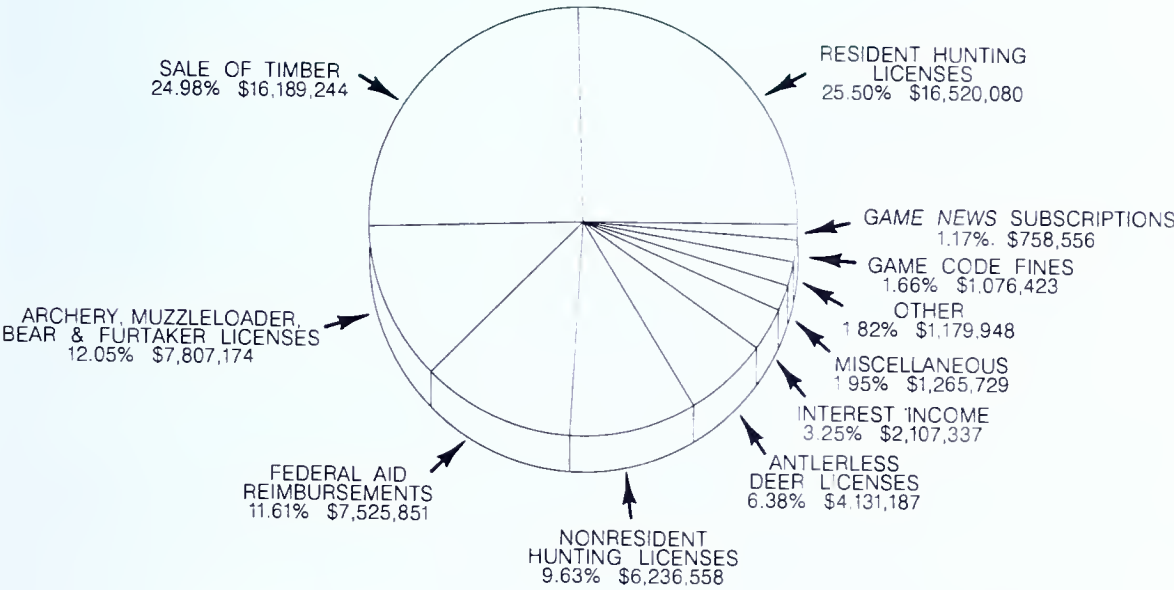
an increase of \$4,669,121 or 8 percent from last year. Salary and benefits increased by \$1,285,685 or 3.2 percent due to contract increases and filling of vacancies. Land purchases and acquisition costs increased by \$1,226,913. The previous year had little activity in land acquisition due to funding limitations. Purchase of motor vehicles increased by \$355,142 or 25.5 percent as prior year orders were delayed by production problems. Educational supplies, literature, and classroom training equipment increased by \$335,058 or 74.1 percent while electronic data purchases increased by \$323,251 or 55.2 percent. Training classes contributed to these increases as well as the purchase of personal computers and video projectors for assisting wildlife conservation officers with various commission programs and communications. Purchases of equipment and machinery increased by \$575,375 or 150 percent.

Offsetting these increases was a decrease in radio and communications equipment purchases and contracted maintenance services of \$665,077 or 19.3 percent. The commission's installation of a radio system in the western region was completed. A final inspection was held the beginning of October. Travel and special conference expenses decreased by \$113,445 or 14.8 percent.

Act 166 of 1998 further amended the Game Code sections relating to mandatory spending.

The Game Code stipulates that a minimum of \$1.25 from each resident license for which the full fee has been paid and a minimum of \$2.00 from each antlerless deer license issued for which the full fee has been paid is to be used solely for habitat improvement and restoration conducive to increasing natural propagation of game or wildlife on all lands under the control or operations of the commission, including lands enrolled in the commission's public access programs and other public lands open to hunting

GAME COMMISSION REVENUE
\$64,798,087
FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2000





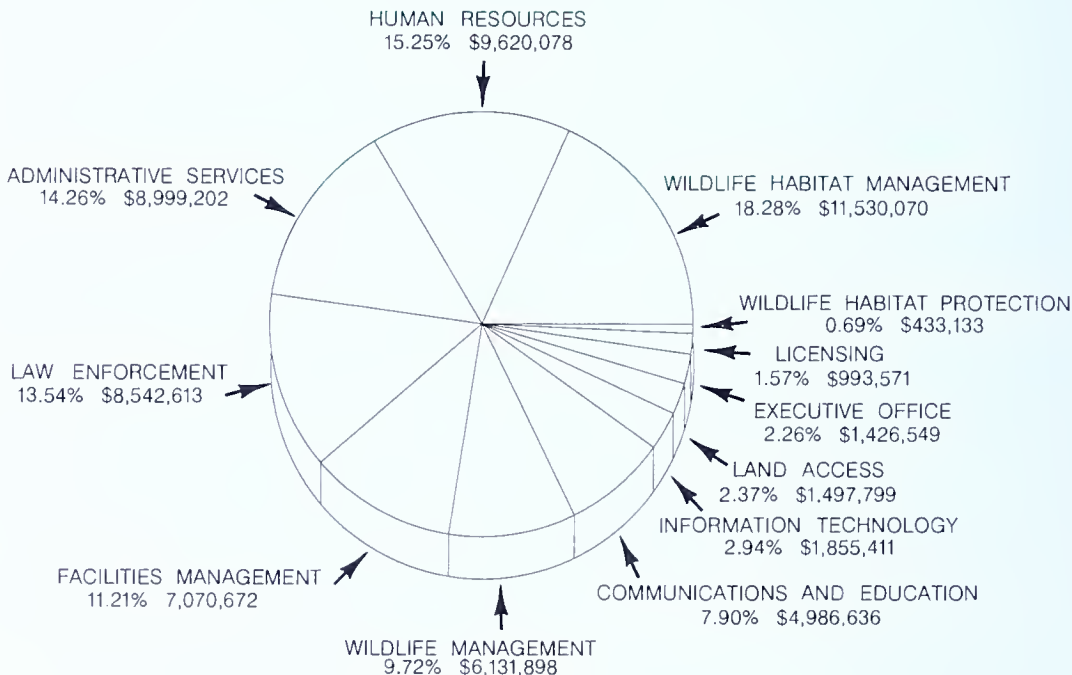
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agreement with the commission. The number of resident licenses sold during the 1999-00 fiscal year, as reported by the Game Commission, totaled 926,647. This mandated that a minimum of \$1,158,309 be expended for the above purposes.

The actual amount expended and committed during the fiscal year for these purposes, as provided by the agency was \$2,815,546, an excess of \$1,657,237 over the law's requirement. Antlerless deer licenses sold during the 1999-00 fiscal year, as reported by the Game Commission, totaled 740,833. This mandated that a minimum of \$1,481,666 be expended for the above-mentioned purposes. The actual amount expended

and committed during the fiscal year for these purposes, as provided by the commission was \$2,193,224, an excess of \$711,558 over the requirement. The code also states that a minimum of \$3.00 from each resident and nonresident license for which the full fee has been paid is to be used solely for habitat improvement and restoration conducive to increasing natural propagation of game on all lands under the control or operation of the commission, including lands enrolled in the commission's public access programs and other public lands open to hunting under agreement with the commission. The number of resident and nonresident licenses sold during the 1999-00 fiscal year, as reported by the Game Commission, totaled 996,415. This mandated that a minimum of \$2,989,245 be expended for the above purposes. The actual amount expended and committed during the fiscal year for these purposes, as provided by the agency was \$3,856,017, an excess of \$866,772 over the law's requirement. The money collected for the above are now deposited into three separate restricted revenue and expense accounts in accordance with Act 166 of 1998. Expenses in excess of the funds collected are absorbed in the Game Commission operating executive authorization.

GAME FUND EXPENDITURES \$63,087,632 FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2000



Game Fund Balance Sheet

June 30, 2000

Assets

Cash with treasurer	\$215
Cash in transit	8,710
Cash-advancement accounts	20,985
Investments	34,213,000
Accrued interest receivable	189,919
Grants receivable – federal government	1,973,459
Fixed assets	96,087,378
Due from other funds	317,000

Total Assets \$132,810,666

Liabilities

Vouchers payable	161,096
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	6,510,314
Due to other commonwealth funds	224,606
Due to other governments	137,818

Total Liabilities \$7,033,834

Fund Equity

Reserve for current encumbrances	1,440,621
Reserve for restricted receipts	30,284
Reserve for restricted revenue	234,722
Fund balance unreserved/undesignated	27,983,827
Investment in fixed assets	96,087,378

Total Fund Equity \$125,776,832

Total Liabilities and Fund Equity \$132,810,666

Game Fund Statement of Unreserved Fund Balance for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2000

Fund Balance - Unreserved/Undesignated, June 30, 1999 **\$24,776,771**

Reserve for restricted receipts, June 30, 1999 **30,284**

Reserve for restricted revenue, June 30, 1999 **385,498**

Add: Actual cash receipts July 1, 1999 through
June 30, 2000 \$64,798,087

Change in fair value of investments July 1, 1999 through
June 30, 2000 79,000

Reversal of prior year change in fair value of investments (13,000)

Revenue earned as of June 30, 1999 and
deposited in 1999-00 (2,642,074)

Revenue earned but not received as of June 30, 2000

Due from other funds 317,000

License & Fees, miscellaneous 8,710

Interest on short term investment 189,919

Due from Federal Gov't (Grants) 1,973,459

Total revenue accrued but not received
as of June 30, 2000 2,489,088



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Total revenue earned during '99-00	64,711,101
Lapses from prior year appropriations	<u>2,957,863</u>
Unreserved-Undesignated Fund Balance Before Commitments and Expenditures	92,861,517
Deduct: Current year expenditures and commitments posted from 7/1/99 - 6/30/00	63,087,632
Reserve for restricted receipts	30,284
Reserve for restricted revenue	234,722
Expenditure accruals as of 6/30/00	6,882,753
Commitments liquidated against 6/30/00 expenditure accruals	(7,171,768)
Reversal of prior year commitments and expenditure accrual	1,814,067
Total expenditures, commitments and reserves	<u>64,877,690</u>
Fund Balance-Unreserved/Undesignated, June 30, 2000	<u>\$27,983,827</u>

Schedule of Actual Revenue Deposited in Game Fund Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2000

Licenses and Fees

Resident hunting — adult	\$14,935,948
Resident hunting — junior	322,018
Resident hunting — senior	524,073
Resident lifetime hunting — senior	172,564
Resident Junior combination	284,306
Resident Senior lifetime combination	273,947
Nonresident hunting	6,021,798
Nonresident hunting — junior	89,004
Nonresident junior combination	33,065
Resident bear	1,476,351
Nonresident bear	81,768
Antlerless deer	3,600,240
Nonresident antlerless deer	530,947
Archery	3,923,314
Nonresident archery license	338,664
Muzzleloader hunting	1,000,023
Nonresident muzzleloader	95,364
Landowner hunting license	7,224
Nonresident 7-day hunting	92,691
Resident furtaker license — adult	302,615
Resident furtaker license — junior	3,166
Resident furtaker license — senior	9,419
Senior lifetime furtaker license	104
Nonresident furtaker — adult	24,361
Nonresident furtaker — junior	720
Issuing agents' application fee	19,300
Special game permits	278,277
Right-of-way	484,497
Migratory game bird license	229,515
Nonresident migratory game bird license	24,213
Transfer to general habitat improvement	(2,497,265)
Transfer to deer food and cover	(1,609,964)
Transfer to game species habitat improvement	(2,678,813)
Total Licenses and Fees	<u>\$28,393,454</u>

Fines and Penalties	
Game law fines	\$1,076,423
Total Fines and Penalties	<u>\$1,076,423</u>
Miscellaneous Revenue	
Interest on securities & deposits	\$2,107,337
Sale of timber & other wood products	16,189,244
Ground rentals & royalties from oil and gas lease	617,102
Sale of <i>Game News</i>	758,556
Wildlife promotional publications and materials	177,068
Wildlife nongame fund	128,060
Waterfowl management: stamp sales and art print royalties	77,596
Sale of skins and guns	31,787
Other (game land map sales, sale of coal, sale of grain and hay, SPORT promotional publications, prior year expenditure refunds, sales tax and miscellaneous revenue)	<u>209,286</u>
Total Miscellaneous Revenue	<u>\$20,296,036</u>
Total Nontax Revenue	\$49,765,913
Restricted Receipts and Revenue	
Resident license fee – natural propagation of wildlife – general habitat improvement	\$2,497,265
Antlerless deer license fee – natural propagation of wildlife – deer food and cover	1,609,964
Transfer from game species habitat improvement	2,678,813
Total Restricted Receipts & Revenue	<u>\$6,786,042</u>
Augmentations	
Federal aid	\$7,525,851
State augmentations (sale of vehicles, PA conservation corps, donations, streambank fencing, PennDOT reimbursement)	<u>720,281</u>
Total Augmentations	<u>\$8,246,132</u>
Grand Total All Revenue in Game Fund	<u><u>\$64,798,087</u></u>

**Expenditures and Commitments Current Operating Appropriations
for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2000**

Salaries and wages	\$30,642,724
State share employee benefits and training costs	10,413,332
Land purchases and acquisition costs	1,253,685
Printing and advertising	1,653,864
Automotive repairs, supplies, and rentals	1,206,244
Payments to local municipalities in-lieu-of-taxes	1,672,155
Maintenance and improvements of building, grounds, and machinery	1,740,310
Payments to other state agencies:	
Comptroller services rendered	337,346
Auditing services	113,308
Civil Service and Personnel services	87,186
Purchasing services	36,151
Checkwriting and Disbursement services	17,334



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EDP Contractual Services	1
Pheasant feed	351,765
Wildlife habitat seedlings and plantings	66,232
Purchase of motor vehicles	1,748,023
Travel and special conference expenses	653,213
Radio and communications equipment purchases and contracted maintenance service	2,778,267
Telephone expenses	504,815
Postage	611,994
Heating, power and light	403,460
Legal, appraisal, and consulting fees	1,651,053
Other supplies and services	818,765
Uniforms for Game Commission personnel	401,032
Office equipment, maintenance, rentals, and supplies	432,869
Purchase of equipment and machinery	953,632
Electronic data processing contractual services, rentals, and purchases	908,424
Educational supplies, literature, and classroom training equipment	787,207
Insurance - auto, liability, fidelity	153,911
Clinical services, laboratory and medical supplies	10,367
Payments to individuals for bear damage claims	1,030
Deer fencing	27,354
Payments to nonprofit institutions	86,169
Payments to institutions/individuals for research projects	105,175
Purchasing card expenses	308,459
Total Operating Commitments & Expenses	\$62,936,856
Other restricted expenses:	
Environmental assessment damage recoveries	150,776
Grand Total	<u><u>\$63,087,632</u></u>

Game Fund Expenditures and Commitments by Program Area July 1, 1999 through June 30, 2000

Executive office	\$998,316
Comptroller operations	337,346
Non-distributable comptroller costs	63,773
Assisting other agencies	27,114
Public works program	215,250
General administration	3,765,693
Personnel costs	7,043,622
Warehousing	62,125
Agency purchasing	595,941
Auto acquisition, maintenance, credit card cost	286,542
Office maintenance and services	556,192
Training costs	1,963,105
Licensing program	993,571
800 telephone service	2,097
Information & Education admin. & planning	183,158
Public services	2,254,399
Publications	1,348,240
Hunter-Trapper Education program	605,723
Audio - Visual program	595,116
Wildlife Management program administration	1,039,258

Game farm operations	2,382,824
Wildlife research support services	55,980
Forest wildlife research program	1,154,675
Furbearer and farmland research program	162,252
Migratory game bird & waterfowl research program	349,765
Wildlife diversity research management program	245,409
Law enforcement program management & planning	1,661,706
General law enforcement	7,364,315
Animal damage complaints	717,792
Special permits	178,990
In-service training, law enforcement	612,286
Assisting other agencies' law enforcement	12,379
Radio system	2,856,043
General equipment maintenance	189,858
Damage to wildlife	23,943
Endangered species & nongame law enforcement	10,008
Information systems	696,951
Data center operations	97,470
Computer mainframe application	696,979
Data communications networking	62,647
Desktop computing	302,355
Land management administration	4,075,340
Environmental review program	244,455
Land acquisition	4,049,281
Howard Nursery management	469,106
Herbaceous openings	1,311,005
Public access programs	1,196,918
Forest management	2,899,509
Food-producing improvements	484,984
Game lands construction & maintenance	5,148,958
Shooting range construction & maintenance	286,092
Total Operating Commitments & Expenses	\$62,936,856
Other restricted expenses :	
Environmental assessment damage recoveries	150,776
Grand Total	<u><u>\$63,087,632</u></u>

Pennsylvania Game Commission Schedule of Fixed Assets

June 30, 2000

Land and land improvements	\$74,972,572
Buildings & building improvements	10,733,100
Machinery and equipment	10,381,706
Total Fixed Assets	<u><u>\$96,087,378</u></u>

A Reluctant Passage

Penn's Woods Sketchbook by Bob Sopchick

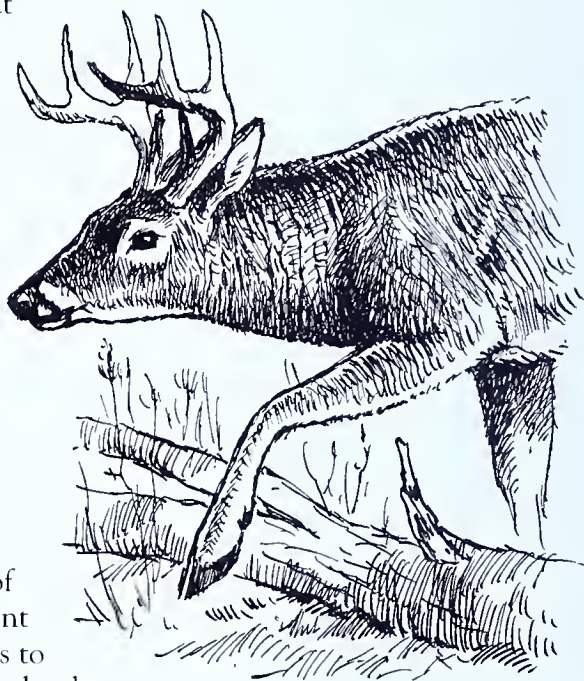
I HANG UP A NEW 2001 CALENDAR in my hunting room. 2001 is the actual start of the new millennium, not the much celebrated event of one year ago, which was the conclusion of the old one. But as I begin to clean and put away my hunting gear and clothes and wipe down the guns, I feel detached because my thoughts lie in another time, another place.

It's hard for me to move on, to let go of autumn. Especially now, as I approach 50, in a busy life where weeks and months fly by, crisscrossing like flocks of nondescript birds, layer upon layer as far as I can see. I recall a time when a day was like a single bird, flying in slow motion from one distant ridge to another. I want to linger in the comfort of autumn somehow, but rounding the corner into January and a new year and the new millennium, it seems a far off place. I suspect that I'm not alone in this notion.

The hunter lives in autumn. His soul lingers there, coursing hills and hollows, fields and ridgelines. His heart beats there, and he can hear it, feel it, pulsing in that time and place, sustaining him in the present. Yes, I know, there are still plenty of hunting opportunities in winter, and it has its own special charm. I'll do some grouse and small game hunting, even a late bowhunt for deer, but I always feel like an accidental tourist in winter. Even familiar places, so expansive and filled with promise in the golden days of fall have shrunk in the intimacy of winter. In autumn, each hollow and field, mountain and farm seems a country unto itself, but a blanket of January snow unites all those divisions, and the world becomes smaller. Autumn is my homeland, and I am a citizen of that country and less fluent in the language of winter.

I'm not done with autumn yet. Let me linger in the wooded hollow below the old farm. A hollow thick with saplings and goldenrod and ancient oaks contorted with age and decked out in russet leaves, where shiny yellow acorns lay on dark deer trails, browning in the fallow light. A hollow where the saplings are shredded by a big buck, ragged signposts that declare his omnipotence.

I want to sit for one more hour in that hollow with my bow, just before dusk when the last orange light of day eases up the opposite hill, slides up the highest branches of the trees, then is gone. An enchanting moment when the breeze fades and the hollow begins to fill with cold air. This is the moment when the deer



sneak through, almost impossible to discern from the woods, revealed only by twitching tails that flash white. A doe scrambles along noisily, ears back, white-eyed. On her heels a rut buck, craggy white rack glowing like pale jade in the dusky woods. He grunts loudly, steadily, ignoring my calls. Instead, he follows the safe route of the invisible chemical highway of the estrous doe. Later, the deer will continue on from the hollow and into my thoughts and dreams.

Sometimes I lay awake and imagine the hollow at night, resplendent in blue moonlight, redolent with the musk of fresh scrapes. Some element of myself is still there, beckoning my physical self to return, and my emotions spin like the last reluctant leaf left on a winter tree.

Let me walk once again, if only for a while, on a misty, rain-soaked flat, thick with grapevines and hickory. In November, after leaf fall, the riotous palette of October is reduced to only a few colors on a neutral background. Grape clusters lay scattered everywhere, many still hanging in the matted canopy of vines. Soft, blue-violet clusters, the same hue as a distant hill. Squish one between the fingers and smell the sweet wine of autumn.

Seven gobblers, beetle-black and shiny, materialize from the mists. They are here to sample the grapes — stoic connoisseurs of autumn's finest. There is a formality in their manner and distinguished garb, enhanced by the adornments of long beards and caruncled heads. Long reptilian feet, sure-footed and agile, enable them to tread quietly over rocks and logs and slick slopes. Their thick, shingled feathers seem impervious to the steady drizzle.

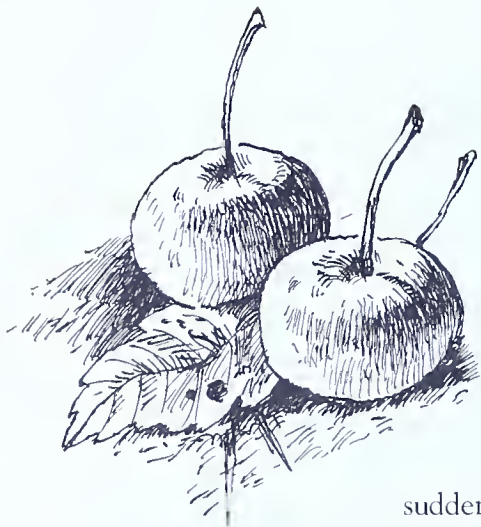
Suddenly, they launch wildly, great barred wings fanning the mists. Once they clear the treetops they sail together far down the mountain. There, they will regroup and continue their work inspecting the bounty of another wild vineyard. For an instant, I could visualize what it would be like to be one of that flock, gliding over the dark oaks and into the safe folds of a mountain hollow. That is as far as my imagination can follow them. I place my ensemble of turkey calls in a box, along with a wing feather I found lying among the grapes.

Looking down the dark slope, there appears to be a cloud of blue smoke wafting through the woods. But it is only the dense, intertwined branches of a crab thicket. I hold a single crabapple, sticky and resinous, and inhale the tart perfume. As autumn progresses, the sweet fragrance of the crab thicket of early October changes to the pungent aroma of an apple barrel.

There is always a grouse or two here, and I usually flush a bird, but the crab woods is so thick that I never get a decent shot. I don't know how they bust up through the thorny boughs without injury.

But it is a safe place — sanctuary from great horned owls that live in the pines at the head of the hollow. The crab thicket is like a coral reef, a living bastion that shelters so





many forms of life. Resident doves and many species of songbirds also seek the protection of this cover. Rabbits and deer often head for the crab thicket when pushed.

Putting away my 115-year-old hammergun, I notice that the gray patina on the bar action is the same as that of the crab boughs, the cryptic swirls in the brown Damascus barrels similar to the markings on the tailfeathers of a grouse. I place the gun in the safe, but cannot shut the door on the image of the grouse whirring up through the thorned trees.

I find some .22 bullets deep in a pocket, and am suddenly back at an old homestead laced with stone walls and foundations on the edge of an oak grove. I don't know what the population of this settlement was so many years ago, but now it is bustling with a frantic citizenry of gray squirrels. There are leafy nests everywhere, penthouse suites at the top of high-rise oaks. From a distance the nests look like roosting turkeys. The mast crop is amazing, and legions of chipmunks, along with the squirrels, are storing the glut of acorns.

Cuttings litter every rock, stump and log. The grays use the stone walls like elevated sidewalks. When I walk through the oaks I hear claws raking bark, then the rapid alarm barking from the trees. A few minutes after settling in at the base of an oak the bushytails cautiously venture out, then they freeze again when a red-tailed hawk sails by.

At dusk I leave the homestead with a limit of grays, fallen to six well-placed shots from my .22 rifle. Squirrel hunting helps young hunters mature, sharpens their woodsmanship. But for the mature hunter, it has an invigorating, youthful effect, recalling the simpler days of a hunter's life, when all that was needed was a little patience, a .22, and a handful of bullets.

As I transfer the fat .45-70 cartridges from belt pouch to their designated box for storage, I am reminded of bears, but more of the bear country of the Big Woods. This is the place of high rocky ledges, endless reefs of laurel and dense mountaintop swamps. A place where ravens beck and call and bobcats hunt and coyotes howl on brittle nights. At times, the weather is much more severe than down in the valley. It is a place of solitude and wildness, a place where I can always expect the unexpected.

I often write and illustrate and think about bears, and they frequently pad through my daydreams. Along with the owl and the wolf, I don't think any other animal has inspired as much legend and lore or appeared in as many visual forms as the bear. In 1607 Edward Topsell, a naturalist, clergyman and vicar wrote *The History of Four-footed Beastes*, the first natural history book published in English. He describes the



bear as “armed, filthy, deformed, cruel, dreadful, fierce, greedy . . . bloody, heavy, night ranging . . . menacing . . . head-long, ravening, rigid and terrible . . . ” Further, Topsell states that “A Bear is much subject to blindness of the eyes and for that cause they desire the Hives of Bees, not only for the Hony, but by the Stinging of the Bees their eyes are cured . . . And when it is time these same Bears betake themselves to their dens for the winter where they grow fat though without eating food simply by sucking their forefeet.”

In the last 400 years we have come a long way in understanding bears, but they will always be shrouded in mystery and myth, not because we have not studied them at length, but because they are formidable creatures, citizens of night, and each is unique. Paul Schullery in his *Bears of Yellowstone* writes, “No two bears live exactly the same life. They are as different in physical appearance and personality as are people. In attempting to summarize their lives, it is easy to speak of norms, averages, and probabilities, but one of the marvels of an animal as complex as the bear is its endless capacity to surprise us.”

The sudden appearance of a bear is always a surprise and always unforgettable. Almost everyone who has encountered a bear in the wild will remember all the details of that sighting. I am beginning to believe that my chances of seeing a bear during bear season are about the same as a meteor from some distant galaxy veering off course and plunging into the same northern hollow that I wait in.

Once, while talking to Lynn Rogers, the famed Minnesota bear researcher, I related how I have been traveling to the Big Woods every bear season for 30 years but had never killed a bear. Lynn slapped his thigh and hooted, “You Pennsylvanians sure are dedicated!”

We sure are. Is it the bear that draws me back each autumn? Partially. But more, the lure of ravenspeak from the frigid and ancient peaks.

AUTUMN can be depicted in paintings, described in written words and recorded in photos. All of these may evoke memories of the moment of the flush, the satisfying weight of a whitetail at the end of a drag rope, or the joyful camaraderie of camp life. Autumn can be relived in the conversation surrounding a wild game dinner. Hunters are children of autumn, and to autumn they must return. It is written in the doctrine of the hills and etched in their souls.

2001 is a significant number. But a more significant number to me is 201, because 201 days from now, on August 1, I'll begin to ready this same equipment that I store away now, and like a sea run salmon, will begin my journey along with so many others to the native headwaters of autumn in Penn's Woods.



It's All in the Eyes

By Chuck Lincoln

Berks County WCO

THE OPENING DAY of the '99 antlerless season started out pretty slow. Daylight found Deputy William "Duke" Hacker and me patrolling around Lake Ontelaunee. We then worked our way through Kutztown, and shortly before noon we found ourselves on SGL 106 near Hawk Mountain.

We had run into only a couple dozen hunters and only a few who had deer, but things were about to get busy. While getting gas at the game lands building we overheard the dispatcher trying to contact my neighboring officer John Denchak in Schuylkill County. It had to do with someone shooting at deer in a safety zone. John was tied up on another call, so I asked where the call came from. As it turned out, the call was only a couple

miles from where we were, so Duke and I headed over to give John a hand. When John arrived we had two suspects at the scene. One of the men admitted that he had fired several rounds at some deer, but indicated the deer had been at the other end of the field from the house.

With John was Jonathan Weyant, who was on field assignment from the training school in Harrisburg. While John and I talked to the two suspects, Duke and Jonathan looked for evidence. They soon found cartridge cases in the field, which indicated what had happened. As the deer ran across the field behind the hunter, he turned and started shooting. The deer were heading toward the house, and the hunter was running up the hill toward the house, shooting as he went.

When confronted with the evidence it didn't take long for the shooter to confess that he did, indeed, shoot at deer as they passed between him and the house.

The deer at one point were only 50 yards from the house. We left the paperwork to John and his trainee.

From there Duke and I headed back to Berks County and were once again patrolling SGL 106. Around 3 o'clock we noticed two hunters dragging a deer. While checking licenses Duke found that both hunters had Schuylkill County doe tags. They were both hunting in Berks County, and the



deer had been killed in Berks. Citations were issued and we were off again.

No sooner had we left than the dispatchers were calling me to investigate an incident near the Lehigh County border. A deputy who was a lot closer to the scene was being sent, but the dispatcher wanted us to respond as well. When we arrived it was already dark and raining, and Deputy Bill Brinker was on the scene. The caller indicated that he had been in a field when a group of deer came running toward him. A vehicle pulled off the road, and a man jumped out and started shooting across the road at the deer, with the man who ended up calling us being directly in the line of fire. The shooter then went off into the woods, apparently looking for any deer he may have hit.

We found cartridge cases on both sides of the road, which went along with what the caller had told us. Bill had run the registration of the offender's vehicle, so we were pretty sure who we were looking for. When I left the caller's house, I checked with Duke, who had been watching the offender's vehicle, to see if he had come back. Just as he told me no, I looked across the road and saw a very wet, muddy and tired looking hunter. I asked if he was Mr. Black, and he said yes and asked what was wrong. I asked him what had happened, and he admitted to shooting at the deer, but denied that he had shot across the road. I checked his licenses and asked if he had hit any of the deer. He told me that he had hit one, and that it was in the pole building across the street. I asked him if it was tagged, because his Berks County tag was still attached to his license and was not filled out.

We went over to the deer and found that it was tagged with a Montgomery County

tag. I told him to look me in the eyes and tell me the truth. At that he dropped his head and admitted he stopped his vehicle, jumped out and shot across the road at the deer. Mr. Black was issued citations for shooting across a highway and having an improperly tagged deer, which amounted to \$300 in fines.

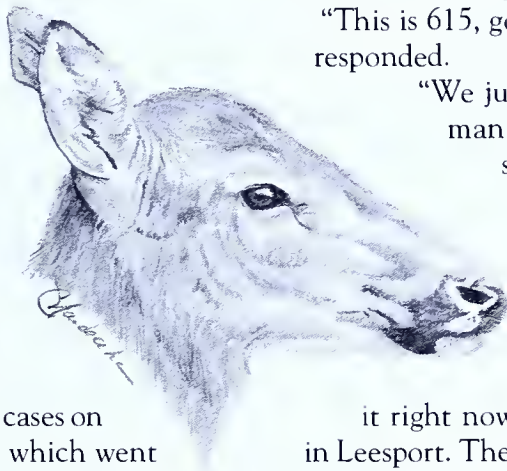
It was now after 8 o'clock, and Duke and I had had a long day. I dropped him off at his home, but before I could get home, the radio cracked, "Reading to 615."

"This is 615, go ahead Reading," I responded.

"We just got a call from a man who said that he saw a Mr. Ed Painter and two other men dragging a large buck out of the woods, and that they were butchering

it right now at Painter's house in Leesport. The caller did not want his name used, so I would not be able to get a search warrant. The only thing I could do was get to the location and hope for the best.

When I arrived I noticed a large detached garage. Behind the garage, on a post, hung the carcass of a rather large deer, minus the head and hide. I could hear the voices of four or five men coming from the garage. Not knowing what I would find I called the Northern Berks Police Department for assistance. Officers Scott Scheaffer and Jason Wakers showed up to help. I filled the officers in on what I knew and then knocked on the door. As soon as the door was opened I could see a big buck lying on the floor. After identifying myself, I said I would like to examine the deer. The man told me his name was Ed Painter and to come on in.



Three other men were inside the garage, along with the carcasses of two more deer. The other two deer were does, and they were tagged. The buck's head, antlers and hide were on the floor, and when I asked Ed where the tag was for the buck he told me it was in his truck. "When did you kill this buck?" I asked.

"Saturday, the last day of buck season," he said.

I told Ed to go out to his truck and get the tag.

While Ed was gone, I examined the head and eyes of the buck. From the looks of this buck, I could tell that it hadn't been shot until around one o'clock that very afternoon. There are several things we look for to determine time of death, and the eyes are a real good indicator. (See Bob D'Angelo's wildlife forensics article in December 1996 *Game News*).

When Ed came back in from getting his tag, which took a lot longer than just running out and grabbing it off the dash, it looked like it had just been filled out and not all of the information was filled in. I asked him again when and where he had killed the deer and he told me the same story. Because there were three other people in the garage, and not knowing who else might have been involved, I told Ed to come outside with me.

Ed didn't know that I had examined the head or that we had a caller who had seen him with the deer, so I was one up on him. When we got outside I told Ed that I knew he was not telling me the truth. "You have one chance to look me in the eyes and tell me when you really killed that buck," I said. He looked at me for a second then dropped his head and told me

that he had shot it earlier that afternoon. He then proceeded to tell me the whole story, and the names of the two hunters who were with him. Ed was charged with taking a buck out of season, a \$500 fine.

The only thing left to do was check the tags on the two does hanging in the garage. When Ed and I returned to the garage, I found that only one of the does was tagged. Everyone tore the garage apart looking for the missing tag. That's when Billy Dorn spoke up. He said that one of the does was his and the other one was his nephew's. Because it was now 11 o'clock I told Billy to just give me his nephew's name and address, and that I would contact him in the morning. Billy agreed, but he wanted to go outside to give me the information.

Once outside Billy said, "I can't lie. None of those guys inside knows this, but I shot both of those does and put my nephew's tag on one of them. My nephew doesn't know, and his mother will kill both of us if she finds out. Here's the tag, I took it off the second doe when you were outside with Ed."

Billy went on to tell me that he and his nephew were planning to go hunting that morning, but the nephew got into trouble, so his mom wouldn't allow him to take off from school. Billy decided to take the nephew's tag in hopes of killing two does. Billy was charged with taking more than the limit of antlerless deer and fined \$500.

My day had started at 5:30 that morning and it was now almost midnight. The deer were loaded on the back of my truck. All the paperwork was completed and when I went outside to leave, Ed came out and wanted to know if he could ask me a question.

"Sure," I replied.

"I just have to know, how did you know I shot the buck today?"

"It's all in the eyes," I said. □

FIELD NOTES

Like Clockwork

MONROE — I was called to a residence to investigate a group of deer that had some sort of mysterious disease. After seeing the deer, I asked the woman who had called how long she had lived in the country. She said she had just moved in. I then explained to her that every fall deer get this same "disease": They change from their summer to winter coats.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Play it Again

YORK — The first thing I read when I receive my *Game News* is the Field Notes, and when I received the October issue I found the Note submitted by WCO Steve Hower about the two hikers who greeted him by saying, "Hey, are you the guys who write Field Notes?" amusing. That very afternoon, while checking pheasant hunters on SGL 181, I encountered a man from Maryland who greeted me with "Are you the guy who writes the Field Notes?"

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION

Nary a Sound

While attending the Game Commission's training school as a member of the 4th Class (1946-47), we received instruction from a State Police trainer on how to move through the woods without making a sound. I practiced this for 35 years of employment with the agency and 19 years of retirement, but never became even slightly proficient at it. I discovered a different method of moving through the woods without making any noise, however: During this year's early muzzleloader season, I simply removed my left hearing aid and turned off the right one.

— WCO EDWARD W. CAMPBELL, RETIRED,
YORK HAVEN

Well Done

SNYDER — Having completed another season of HTE classes, I must take my hat off to my instructors. These people know their subjects well, volunteer their time and resources, and spend hours updating their knowledge — all for no compensation other than self-satisfaction.

— WCO GERALD L. SMITH, SAYRE



Needs More Practice

CLINTON — After parking in a farmer's driveway with chickens, turkeys, dogs and cats running around, I returned to my vehicle and started backing out when I heard a horrendous squeal. I slammed on the brakes and asked Deputy Dave Shimp what I had run over. Dave got a sheepish grin on his face and said that he was just practicing with his diaphragm turkey call.

— WCO KEN PACKARD, JERSEY SHORE

Resourceful

While checking a hunter I noticed a paperclip attached to his hunting license. The man said that if he harvested a deer, the paperclip could be straightened out and used to fill out his tag and also as a twist-tie to attach the tag to the deer's ear.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, PITTSBURGH



Close Encounter

MONROE — On SGL 38 I noticed two doe and a fawn walking towards me about 75 yards away. Moments later all three deer went on alert and then, like a rocket, a bobcat exploded from a nearby ravine and tackled the fawn. Over-running the fawn, the bobcat lunged again with its front paw and swept the fawn off its legs. Immediately, the two adult does began striking the bobcat with their front hooves. Being outmatched, the bobcat trotted away and the fawn retreated with the other deer.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Sincere Gratitude

UNION — Charles Hufnagle of Lewisburg recently retired as a deputy WCO after more than 25 years of serving the citizens of this county, the PGC and our wildlife resources.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Congratulations

BUCKS — While attending the Ottsville HTE class I asked if any student was born in 1969. Student Marian Bishop of Dublin raised her hand, so I asked her to assist with my presentation. I had Marian present a 30-Year Service Award to HTE instructor Jim Michener, recognizing that Jim's dedication to HTE instruction began the year Marian was born.

— WCO STEPHEN T. HANCZAR, OTTSVILLE

Give Him a Hand

LEHIGH — Students at the Trexler-Lehigh County Game Preserve annual environmental fair were really enjoying the rubber animal tracks and inkpads to see what kind of tracks they could make, when one young boy put his whole hand on the inkpad and pressed it on his paper. I asked what kind of track it was and he said, "a little rug rat."

— WCO MICHAEL BEAHM, FOGELSVILLE

Excellent Advice

BEDFORD — I asked a bowhunter in a treestand to come down so I could check his license, and as he turned to do so his stand came crashing to the ground. Fortunately, the hunter was able to grab onto the trunk of the tree and avoid a disaster. We discovered that a bolt on his stand had fallen out, causing the stand to give way. Please, always wear a safety harness, not just a belt, when hunting out of a treestand.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Good Deed

DAUPHIN — An access road to SGL 264 north of Williamstown is a popular spot for dumping trash and had become quite an eyesore. Williams Valley High School teacher Donna Williard and her students spent a day cleaning it, assisted by local sportsmen. Together, they collected a truckload of trash and 210 automobile tires.

— WCO MIKE DOHERTY, DAUPHIN

Little Piece of Home

JUNIATA — I recently ran into a long-time friend who had taken a position as a professor at Clemson University in South Carolina. He remarked about how much he looks forward to receiving *Game News* each month, as it keeps him in touch with his Pennsylvania roots. Many of us take the little magazine for granted, but for those who have moved out of state, it's a welcome glimpse of home.

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE

So Much for Impressing

DAUPHIN — Being a new officer I'm concerned with gaining my deputies' confidence in my knowledge of the job, so while patrolling with Deputy Dan Hall one evening, looking for a roadkilled deer, my keen eyesight quickly located the deer and I eased the vehicle in to pick it up. Dan jumped out and immediately turned around and climbed back in the vehicle. Puzzled, I asked what was wrong, and he replied that it was the McKenzie target variety.

— WCO MARK S. FAIR, MIDDLETOWN

Doesn't Like Seafood

WYOMING — Ray Goeringer told me about a great blue heron on his farm that spends more time in the fields than it does in the pond. Great blue herons are often seen standing statue-like in shallow water as they wait for an unwary fish, but Ray says this particular heron would rather stride about his mowed fields spearing voles.

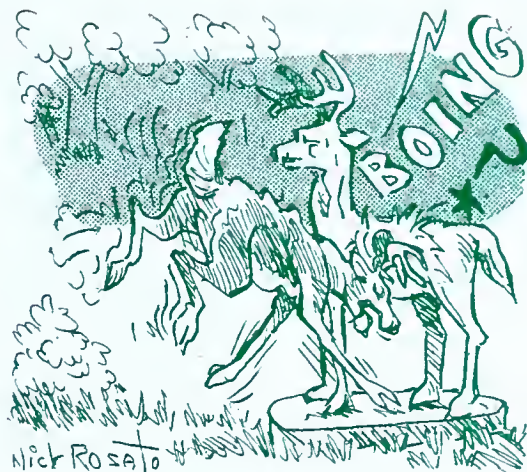
— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK



It's About Time

BRADFORD — I want to welcome Matt and Jen Grebeck to Bradford County. Matt is the new WCO assigned to my previously vacant neighboring district, and I'm happy to see him arrive. Now I won't have to do the paperwork for that district anymore.

— WCO VERNON I. PERRY, III, MONROETON



Concrete Head

JEFFERSON — Brookville police officer Kevin Bickle told me that one night his mother noticed a buck facing down a concrete deer ornament in her yard. She said the real deer stood staring intently at the statue for quite some time then turned and walked away. The buck returned and faced off the concrete deer again. The next day Mrs. Bickle noticed that one of the antlers on the lawn ornament had been broken off. Apparently, the real deer took exception to the laid-back intruder in his territory.

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

Death Wish

FULTON — Deputy Richard Carbaugh and I were trying to locate a roadkilled deer when we barely stopped in time to avoid hitting a live one. I remarked that that deer would probably be the next one we'd be called to pick up. When we turned around to make another pass to try and locate the roadkill, we were shocked to see a freshly hit deer lying in the road where moments before we had nearly hit one. When we stopped to see what had happened, Diana Haulsee of Littlestown pulled in behind us with a damaged fender. Mrs. Haulsee didn't seem surprised to see us. I guess she assumed we automatically appear each time a deer gets hit by a car.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Technology

ARMSTRONG — Sometimes I can't believe how much more paperwork I have compared to even a few years ago. The new computers are nice, but with e-mails, voice-mails, hard copies, and all the various office duties now required, perhaps we should change the meaning of WCO to wildlife clerical officer, not wildlife conservation officer.

— WCO BARRY J. SETH, WORTHINGTON

Unusual From the Start

BRADFORD — Irene Wood, who lives by Lake Nephawin, called to tell me about an unusual mallard. It seems this duck started its life as an egg in a goose nest, and after hatching, the little duck stayed with the goose family throughout the spring and summer. When the geese flew south, however, the duck remained. The following spring the duck began to have young of its own, and subsequently had four broods with 50 ducklings in all. The last young left the nest on October 2.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY



We Make Road Calls

CLINTON — A young man stopped at my home to report an injured fox he had found lying along the road. When I asked for directions he pointed to the trunk of his car and said, "Be careful, it bites." Please, leave injured animals where you find them.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

In for a Treat

In October we set a record for attendance at our self-guided tour of SGL 57 in Wyoming County. We recorded 148 vehicles and approximately 335 individuals. I would like to thank the Sullivan and Wyoming County Food & Cover crew, and the many volunteer groups who helped with our habitat work. I encourage each of you to attend one of these game land tours, not only to enjoy the beauty of these great tracts of public hunting areas, but to also get a better idea of just what our agency is doing to promote wildlife and improve habitat.

— LMO EUGENE R. WEINER, JR., CAMBRA

Tough One

Food & Cover Corp member Chuck Schmitt was shooting at one of his two 3-D deer targets last summer when he noticed a small bird fly from the target he was shooting at. While retrieving his arrows he discovered that bluebirds were using a nest cavity in the hindquarters of his target. Chuck began using the other target, but it wasn't long until a woodpecker began constructing a nest cavity in that one. Chuck had to decide if it was easier to evict the birds or convince his wife he needed to buy another target.

— GAME LANDS MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR
ED WILLOW, LIVERPOOL

Good Advice

WESTMORELAND — I recently checked an individual who had purchased his senior lifetime license two years ago, and he was a little confused as to how lifetime licenses actually work. He thought that his original license was valid for his lifetime, and did not realize he needed to go to an issuing agent each year to obtain a new back tag at no cost. If you have purchased a lifetime hunting or lifetime combination license, be sure to pick up your new back tag each year, along with a new *Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations*.

— WCO GARY TOWARD, HYDE PARK

What are the Odds?

WAYNE — After purchasing his 2000 hunting license, John Oberly of Honesdale noticed that the numbers matched his last years' license. Thinking something was amiss, he called the Game Commission and found out that everything was in order, but that the odds of that happening are astronomical. Maybe John should play the lottery.

— WCO FRANK J. DOOLEY, TYLER HILL

Please Comply

CRAWFORD — We checked a lot of hunters here during the small game seasons who weren't wearing the required amount of fluorescent orange. Many of the violators said they didn't know how much orange they were required to wear. Obviously, many people still do not read the hunting and trapping digest, and this year it even has illustrations demonstrating the required orange for each season. Maybe these offenders' copies of their citations will encourage them to read the *Digest* in the future.

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

Big Guinea Pig

After cooking chicken on the grill one evening, I left to do some night patrolling. Several hours later my husband was awakened by noise on the porch and, thinking I had returned early, flipped on the porch light. He was surprised to see a bear dragging off our grill. At least I finally found someone who likes my cooking.

— LMO COLLEEN M. SHANNON, GRAMPIAN

Real Visual Aids

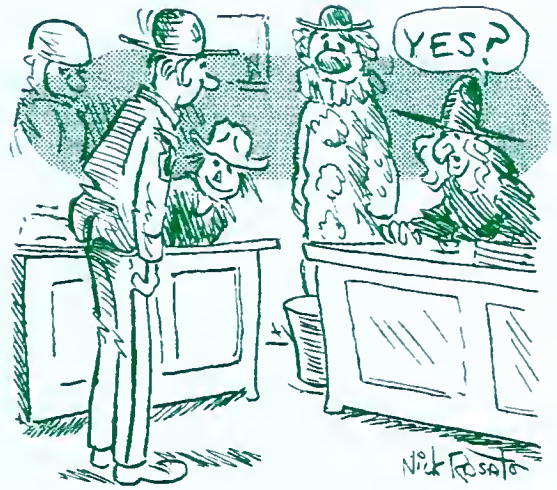
MERCER — At the Jackson Field and Stream Club HTE class, Dennis Anderson was teaching turkey hunting safety, and some students didn't understand what a turkey beard was. Denny was trying to describe where the beard is located when he glanced out the clubhouse back door and noticed a gobbler with a long beard.

— WCO JAMES J. DONATELLI, MERCER

What It's All About

After I completed teaching a bowhunting course at the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program, one of the participants told me that she had taken beginning archery at the program the previous year, and she had enjoyed shooting a bow so much that she went home and bought one and began shooting. She came back this past year to learn about archery hunting, to see if it was something she would like to try.

— LMO DAVE E. MITCHELL, FOGELSVILLE



Scary

WESTMORELAND — When I walked into the magistrate's office to file a citation I wondered if I was in the right place. Behind the glass, talking with a constable, was a clown with yellow hair, a little derby, bright, baggy clothes and a big red nose. Sitting behind the big desk was a witch with a high hat and black cape, and at another desk was a scarecrow talking to a hockey player. Of course it was Halloween, but I had to wonder what the defendants were thinking.

— WCO RODNEY ANSELL, MT. PLEASANT

Bushytails Galore

HUNTINGDON — This fall I've checked more squirrel hunters than I can ever remember. One father and son duo had limits, which included fox squirrels.

— WCO PHILIP J. LUKISH, ALEXANDRIA

Unlawful possession of deer and turkey poaching cases

NINE Florida residents recently pled guilty to multiple charges of unlawful possession of deer in Reynoldsville, Jefferson County. Charges were filed by Pennsylvania Game Commission Wildlife Conservation Officer (WCO) Michael Girosky at District Justice Bernard Hetrick's office in Reynoldsville against: Robert Paul Butcher, age 44; Randy Frank Counts, age 39; Terry Lee Ellis, age 42; Kenneth Troy Mitchell, age 34; and Kenneth Forest Mitchell, age 57, all from Silverspring, Florida.

Also charged were: Brian Scott Meadows, age 22; Sean Ross Bishop, age 29, of Ocala, Florida; James Courtney Loeffler, age 35 of Flaglen Beach, Florida; and Bruce Wayne Wiley, age 41, of Ocklawaha, Florida.

Each defendant pled guilty to two counts of unlawful possession and fined \$1,037 each, resulting in total fines of \$9,333. In addition to the financial penalties imposed, the defendants also face the loss of their hunting privileges.

"This investigation was initiated by the actions of Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officer Charles P. Spuck," said WCO Girosky. "Officer Spuck was stocking pheasants on Wednesday, Nov. 1, in Winslow Township, Jefferson County. He noticed several men around an old vehicle near the location he was releasing pheasants, and noticed that the men, upon see-

ing him, attempted to distance themselves from the vehicle.

"Upon further investigation, Officer Spuck found three antlered deer heads, several salted deer hides and several coolers of deer meat. None of the deer were tagged as required by the Game and Wildlife Code."

Officer Spuck was assisted in this investigation by: WCOs Michael A. Girosky and Roger A. Hartless; Land Management Group Supervisor Bradley Myers; and Deputy WCOs Clyde W. Gearhart, Robert S. Hepler and Jamie D. Carlson. Pennsylvania State Police officers from the DuBois Barracks assisted in transporting the defendants to District Justice Hetrick's Office in Reynoldsville, where they entered guilty pleas.

WCO Girosky further noted that the citizens of Pennsylvania should be thankful for the prompt, observant, actions of Deputy Spuck and the many conservation officers like him that routinely protect our wildlife resources.

In a non-related case, Game Commission officials are seeking information about a poaching incident involving a juvenile turkey hen in Greene Township, Franklin County. The turkey was one of 45 hens currently fitted with radio transmitters as part of a 2.5-year study the Game Commission is conducting in the Michaux State Forest section of Turkey Management Area 7B, which is comprised of por-

tions of Franklin, Adams, Cumberland and York counties.

Since the study was initiated in August 1999, backpack-style transmitters have been fitted on 85 female turkeys, all of which were trapped and released at the capture site within the TMA 7B-study area. The transmitters are equipped with a mortality sensor, which enables biologists to quickly learn when a turkey has died so they can determine the cause of death.

The transmitter that was on this turkey was found on Oct. 11, by Doug Little and Mike Niebauer, Game Commission biologist aides, just off the Route 997 bridge over the Conococheague Creek in Greene Township. Based on the last known telemetry reading and when the transmitter was found, Mary Jo Casalena, Game Commission wild turkey biologist, said the poaching incident most likely occurred on Oct. 9 or 10.

"The last known reading for this turkey was recorded on Oct. 8, in the Sandy Sod area of the Michaux State Forest," Casalena said. "Monday, Oct. 9, was the Columbus Day holiday, and a mortality signal was picked up by midday on Tuesday, Oct. 10."

"We found the transmitter nearly 2.5 miles away from where the last reading was taken," Little said. "Because of the extensive road system in this area, the turkey may have been vulnerable to a poacher driving through the area, especially on the Columbus Day holiday."

Franklin County WCO Barry Leonard is encouraging anyone with information to contact the Game Commission's Southcentral Region

Office at 1-877-877-9107 (toll-free). Any information received will be kept strictly confidential.

WCO Leonard pointed out that the Game Commission recently solved a case involving the killing of an American bald eagle in Franklin County based on information provided by two confidential informants.

Additionally, the Pennsylvania and local chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), partners in the TMA 7B turkey study, have offered a \$500 reward for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible.

"Our members are committed to the success of the wild turkey research project and to the legal and responsible use of the natural resources," said Don O'Brien, Pennsylvania Chapter NWTF president.

As part of the TMA 7B study, the Game Commission trapped and placed radio-transmitters on hen turkeys in order to determine causes of mortality, reproductive success and habitat use. The Game Commission and sportsmen's groups, including the Pennsylvania and local chapters of the NWTF, have been concerned for several years about the apparent suppression of wild turkeys in the South Mountain region. It was for this reason that TMA 7B was split out of TMA 7 in 1995, and that a shorter fall turkey season was put in place.

"Luckily, we can say that poaching has not been a major cause of mortality of the turkeys in the study," Casalena said. "We have confirmed only one other case of poaching in this area since the study began."

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Washington County farmer charged for wanton waste

A WASHINGTON COUNTY farmer was charged with 57 counts of allegedly failing to report to the Game Commission deer he killed for crop damages on property he leased in Nottingham Township.

Kenneth Eugene Barney, of Eighty-Four, also was charged with one count of allegedly refusing to answer, without evasion, any pertinent questions regarding the killing of game or wildlife. Each of the 58 charges is a fourth-degree summary violation under the Game and Wildlife Code, and carries a penalty of \$200.

"This particular case certainly is the exception and not the rule of how the Game Commission and farmers in the southwest region cooperate to help reduce deer impacts on the agricultural community," said Matt Hough, Law Enforcement Supervisor in the Game Commission's Southwest Region Office. "The Game Commission understands that farmers, from time to time, must kill deer causing crop damage. In order to help address those needs, we have several programs in place to help farmers reduce excessive deer populations by giving hunters an opportunity to harvest those deer.

"From our public access programs, to green-tag and red-tag programs, to

the new Link Program, the Game Commission is striving to help direct hunters to landowners and farmers faced with wildlife over-populations, especially deer."

Charges were filed in District Justice James Ellis' office in McMurray by Wildlife Conservation Officer Douglas Dunkerley, who headed up the investigation and was assisted by Deputy WCOs Beth Fife, Harold Breinig and Samuel Houston. According to the charges filed, Barney allegedly killed 57 deer over a four or five month period. Of the 57 deer recovered in various stages of decomposition, 41 were antlered or button bucks.

"Besides demonstrating an absolute disregard for wildlife, Mr. Barney deprived many needy families in this area of hundreds of pounds of nutritious venison by not contacting us about the deer he killed for crop damage," Hough said. The Game Commission, in cooperation with local food banks and the Hunters Sharing the Harvest program, provides venison from deer killed for crop damage and donated by hunters to needy families.

The Game Commission's new Link Program serves as a catalyst for landowners and farmers seeking relief from wildlife populations and hunters and

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

trappers looking for new opportunities. Under Link, landowners can select which hunters and trappers they allow on their properties as well as what type of hunting and trapping they permit.

Landowners and farmers also can enroll in one of three programs offered by the Game Commission that open properties to public hunting and trapping: Safety Zone, Farm-Game and Forest-Game.

Farmers enrolled in one of the

Game Commission's public access programs, and who can document the need for further relief from excessive crop damages caused by deer, also may be eligible for the agency's deer damage or deer depredation programs, which are commonly referred to as "green-tag" or "red-tag" programs. These programs enable farmers to use hunters to control deer herds on their property through expanded antlerless deer hunting opportunities.

PGC Retirees

ALSO RETIRING were Anthony Austin, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor, Sweet Valley, 2/4/75-10/27/00; Stephanie Freeman, Clerk Typist 3, Bureau of Land Management, Steelton, 12/22/75-10/27/00; Dennis Jones, Game Conservation Officer Supervisor, Ligonier, 3/28/70-1/7/00; Barbara Bondra-King, Administrative Assistant 1, Mechanicsburg, 2/7/72-5/26/00; Alvin Leslie, Land Management Equipment Operator, Fort Hill, 2/11/69-1/7/00; J. Hugh Palmer, Wildlife Biologist 3, Millville, 1/23/65-1/21/00; Martin S. Wheeler, Dispatcher, Northeast Region Office, Taylor, 6/1/88-6/29/00.



Edward A. Howell
Game Lands Main. Sup.
Southcentral Region
Newport
11/2/64-2/4/00

Robert E. Treisch
Game Lands Main. Sup.
Southeast Region
Denver
1/7/78-3/31/00



Report Card reminder

DEER HUNTERS, don't forget to send in report cards for any and all deer you've taken, or do take in the late archery and muzzleloader seasons, this license year. Report cards provide vital information for our deer management program. Be sure to include the deer management unit and township where the deer was taken, too. This

information is necessary to fully evaluate any change in the current, county deer management unit system. Refer to page 19 of the current *Hunting and Trapping Digest* for a map of deer management units.

If you don't have a big game report card, use or make a copy of the one on page 40 of the *Digest*.

Another View

By Linda Steiner

Everyone at some point asks this burning question. From a hunter's viewpoint, the author doesn't hesitate one bit with her response.

Would I Do it All Over Again?

A FEW YEARS ago a popular movie was "Peggy Sue Got Married." In it the old question of "If I had it to do all over again, would I?" was asked and answered predictably. Given a second chance, Peggy Sue fell in love and got married to the same guy, anyway.



As this is the beginning of a New Year, now is a good time to not only look forward, but also to look back. This time the question is, "If I had it to do all over again, would I become a hunter?"

We can't actually go back, not like the movie suggests. I am a hunter, and I'm the type of hunter I am, and that's not a redundant statement. I don't plan to change that, but if I were faced with going down the same road that made me a hunter — if I were magically transported back, say, to the summer of '67, when I opened the door and a young man from Pennsylvania was standing there — would I have done anything different?

I wouldn't have slammed the door on him, even if I had known then I would someday have my arms elbow deep in a deer's innards (field-dressing my own kills). At least I don't think I would; I've never been squeamish. I would have married him

I AM where I am today as a hunter, and it's an altogether nice place to be. Something different happens in the woods each time I'm there, each hunt is unique, and that keeps me going.

anyway, of that I'm sure. He was a Pennsylvania Hunter, from a family of Pennsylvania Hunters, and I mean the capital letters. Classic red-and-black Woolrich, Winchester lever-action .30-30, Buck knife — the complete scene.

That first evening, when a bunch of us gals and guys walked toward the seashore in Stone Harbor, New Jersey, I found myself chatting mostly to a lonesome looking young Coast Guardsman from western Pennsylvania. We exchanged mailing addresses and the first fork in the road was irretrievably taken.

The second turning was on a rifle range near Jeannette, Pennsylvania. By then we were engaged, and I knew he hunted, but knew it in a hazy sort of way. I had bought him a Jack O'Connor book for Christmas, with what I thought was an appropriate "deer" on the front (it was actually a bull elk), never understanding that my mistake didn't matter because of the author (Jack who?). I accompanied him to the range, and after he'd shot a couple of times, during which I'd covered my ears from a distance, he said, "Come try it. If you're going to hunt with me, you've got to learn to shoot."

Huh? If I'm going to what with you? That was the first time I'd heard that mentioned, although if I hadn't been so starry-eyed, my ears might have detected the hints that had begun months before, when the first autumn leaves fell. Right then I could have said, "No, I don't think so. Let's go for a burger and fries at the mall." But I didn't. Even then I wasn't crazy about burgers, French fries or malls. I slid onto the shooting bench, hunkered down on the rifle stock, squinted through the buckhorn sight, gripped tight and pulled. The rest is personal history.

So if I could begin anew, I'd still have hooked up with a hunter. I wouldn't have stayed home when I had the chance to go to the range and, later, roaming the woods with him. Perhaps by then it was already too late to stop the momentum toward my

becoming a hunter.

But there were other pulls. We were married in 1969, when the "Ban the Bomb" symbol had newly evolved into the peace symbol, and I'd learned to do Peter Max lettering and paint Day-Glo bright posters for my friends. A local rock n' roll radio station, between spinning the "Moody Blues" and "Jefferson Airplane," was carrying messages from an animal rights group about the "poor little fur seals" being "slaughtered" in the Arctic. That was a time of life that I was following the crowd, which ironically thought it was being individualistic, and I began repeating what I heard on the radio.

My newlywed Pennsylvania hunter-husband was the one who brought me up short. "So you believe that stuff is true, huh? What do you really know about it?" The answer was nothing. I was just parroting, part of the herd. So I began looking into the subject, and found out — surprise for someone who was still so young and overly trusting — that there were two sides and two interpretations of what was happening and why regarding the seal harvest in the Far North. Again it was my choice of which fork to follow. What would I do if I had the opportunity again?

I did what I believe I would do again today. I veered away from the empty philosophy and emotion of the animal rights stance and turned toward facts and science, retaining sensitivity and conscience. I read more about wildlife and watched it when we went for walks in the woods. I discovered Aldo Leopold's writings and consumed that Jack O'Connor book from cover to cover. I found out about wildlife's real behavior and place in the ecosystem (a new word for most people back then), not the fairy tales the anti's were offering.

I went on a "great adventure," accompanying my six-months-married spouse on his antlerless deer hunt in Forest County. I was still a nonresident, living in New Jersey near his Coast Guard base, at a time when it was next to impossible for out-of-

staters to draw a “doe” license. We padded through the snowy woods, out the flat and down the point toward Tionesta Creek. On the way back on the path along Little Coon Creek, three deer stood up under a hemlock. He shot, one went down, came up scrambling and fell again. By then we were both up the bank and standing by the animal. He put another shot, the required quick dispatch, in the neck. I saw the blood, saw the eye go dull, saw the kill.

Next intersection in the road. Would I be disgusted? If I had the opportunity again, would I decide I was never going on another hunt, certainly never do this myself? I doubt it. I had already seen dead game, rabbits my dad had shot, a deer or two hung in a garage to skin or in the back of a pickup truck. I was becoming adult enough to know that death happens, and that it's not an ugly thing. His killing the doe he was now tagging was natural. This cessation of life was inevitable, even if it was a bullet and not sickness, injury or old age that had brought death to the deer.

By then I knew all about the whitetail winter kills taking place in the Allegheny National Forest and elsewhere in the northern tier, and of the need to reduce the deer herd. I had seen deer in the spring in that region, with the bones practically sticking out of their hides, because they were starving. I could not only watch a deer kill, but I could hunt myself, its reality and its purpose acceptable in my mind.

I eventually did shoot my first deer, and in time my 50th, hunting in several states for the past 30 years, bucks and does and multiple tags. I am where I am today as a hunter, and it's an altogether nice place to be. Something different happens in the woods each time I'm there, each hunt is unique, and that keeps me going.

But being a hunter hasn't been easy. The anti-hunting and animal rights movements from 30 years ago haven't disappeared, and in some ways have gotten stronger, although they're still as wrong-headed and misinformed. If I had taken up bowling as

my primary sport, there would be no one out there trying to put an end to my recreation, no one going on about “cruelty to tenpins,” no one trying to close down the bowling alleys. I wouldn't have to listen to snippy remarks like, “I don't believe in bowling, how could you do that?” — always spoken by my hostess's best friend, so I must diplomatically deflect the subject. I wouldn't have to defend the making of splits, as I sometimes do the taking of deer. I wouldn't have had the hassle.

If I hadn't become a hunter, I would have had my falls free for other things. From the end of September until past the New Year, time off equals hunting time. By all-involvement with hunting, I am missing fall fishing, when trout streams cool and lakes “turn over” and the bass fishing gets good again. Instead of still-hunting so slow that I'm conscious of my boot crushing each leaf, I would be hiking merrily through the autumn leaves, not worrying what I crunch underfoot. I could be canoeing or bicycling until the snow stops me. I'd begin snowshoeing and cross-country skiing in December, rather than waiting until the latter part of January. I might even go to a few football games. Thanksgiving with family would not include the rush back for buck season, and the week between Christmas and New Year's would have leisure for holiday visits.

Perhaps some year I will take time for these other pursuits, but I doubt it. Years have passed, and what I look forward to is joining my retired husband in my own retirement, when I'll hunt every day I can, just like him. We can never go back, and although becoming a hunter wasn't the typical route for most young women, I'm satisfied that I journeyed that way. Poet Robert Frost put it even better:

“Two roads converged in a yellow
wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

LMO Diary

By Brad Myers

Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

Border cuts and brushpiles are just some of what we make this month, but planning for the upcoming planting season is a top priority.

THE MANAGEMENT of wildlife habitats is very important to the Game Commission. It has been in the past and will continue to be in the future. It is our responsibility as a state agency to protect and enhance habitat for game and nongame species alike. We take this job seriously, and as one of the agency's 29 Land Management Officers (LMOs) it is my main responsibility. My area or "group" consists of Clarion and Jefferson counties located in the Northwest Region of the state.

If you're a new reader of *Game News*, please look over the agency's annual report in this issue. It explains in great detail how your license money is spent and, at the same time, the many aspects of our agency.

Note the pie charts in the financial section. These show where the agency's revenue comes from and how it's spent. From the expenditure chart, it's obvious that the Game Commission spends more money on land management than on any other function. That in itself shows how strongly we are committed to the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat.

But you say, "Hey, wait a minute, where can I physically see how all this money is spent?"

I'm glad you asked.

Many times I hear a statement like "the Game Commission never does any habitat work on our local game lands, except plant a field once in a while." Or, I will get

asked at a sportsmen's club meeting as to how many acres of corn we will plant on game lands this year.

First of all, let me say that although it may have limited benefits for some species, planting corn fields on game lands is not wildlife habitat management. Nor is it the most effective or efficient use of your hunting license dollars.

Now that I have your attention, I would ask that you go to your local game lands, but don't focus your attention on looking for game, like you do when hunting. Instead, pay attention to what you see around you. See that stand of spruce and how its branches provide thermal cover right down to the ground? Chances are it was planted by the food and cover crew. See that small field over there? Go look at it a little closer. Get down on your knees and look. Can you identify the plants growing there? Those particular grasses, clovers and other legumes did not just sprout up there. They were planted there for a reason: They are beneficial to wildlife. Furthermore, for them to grow, I'll bet tons of lime and hundreds of pounds of fertilizer had to be applied to that field. Look along the edge of the field. See the different vegetative height layers between the field and the woods, how there's a short grassy layer, a high grassy layer, a layer of briars, a layer of berry or mast producing shrubs, and then trees? That stuff didn't just grow that way; it was managed to grow like that.

See that “timber sale” over there? Go walk through it. If you really look, you’ll see that many of the nicest trees were left to produce mast and others to provide denning sites for wildlife. Look at the ground and you’ll find seedling regeneration to provide these elements and a renewable resource well into the future, not to mention all that treetop browse left on the ground for deer food and to protect the growing seedlings.



NOTICE that the brushpile under construction above has large logs as a foundation to provide entry points and ensure that it will last many years. The completed brushpile, right, has smaller logs, limbs and pine branches added for thermal and predator protection.

These things were planned this way. I could go on and on, but these are good examples of your license dollars at work, and this kind of work is more beneficial to more species of wildlife than planting cornfields. The next time you hear someone complain about the lack of habitat work on game lands, ask yourself if they have really “seen” the game lands.

Week One

Having taken off the end of December, my year starts off with monthly reports. I then meet Forman Gary Maxwell and Everett Reitz for our monthly “power meeting,” so they can hand in their reports and we can discuss our priorities for the month.

Because there is not enough ice on the wetlands to walk out and clean and repair wood duck boxes, we decide to start cleaning and repairing our bluebird boxes and start border cutting for wildlife on a couple of our Farm-Game Program.

The agency’s Farm-Game Program has been around since the 1930s. It has been a huge success, with more than 20,000 landowners statewide and 800 plus in just my group. The Farm-Game Program is an agreement between a landowner and the Game Commission to leave their land open for public hunting and trapping. The program includes provisions intended to assure the landowner property protection, and an opportunity to develop good land use practices, which enhance wildlife habitat.



Sportsmen should appreciate these programs and recognize the need to respect these landowners and their properties if we hope to keep them into the future. Some of the complaints I get from landowners include: people don’t ask permission to park and hunt; litter; disturbing livestock; driving on the property, and spotlighting the house at night. Sportsmen, please take note and let’s try to eliminate these complaints.

I meet Gary Maxwell, Farm-Game Manager Tom Deitz, and a Farm-Game

cooperator in Clarion County to look over his property and assist him with developing some small game habitat. Border cutting, fruit tree daylight releases, shrub plantings and mowing are techniques we recommend. Gary's crew will do some of this work, and some will be done by the landowner.

Week Two

I meet with Joe Tarantino from the DEP Knox office to discuss an upcoming strip mine site in Jefferson County. Even though the site is not on game lands, we discuss the protection of valuable habitats such as beaver dams, herbaceous cover and tree species to be put back onto the site at the conclusion of mining operations.

I spend time this week with Farm-Game Manager Lee Jordan in Jefferson County, to lay out a Farm-Game habitat project on a site owned by the Headwaters Charitable Trust. Owned by an organization and left open for public enjoyment, this property has one of the nicest wetland complexes in the county. A representative from the organization could not be there with us, so Lee and I look at items such as installation of wood duck and mallard nesting devices, goose nesting areas, border cuts, brushpiles, food plots, shrub and mast plantings. We will work up a habitat enhancement plan and submit it for the organization's approval.

Much of the cost for this work will come from sportsmen's clubs, grants, as well as the Game Commission. Projects this large will not be accomplished in one year. I have only a 4-man Food and Cover crew in this county and have a lot of work to accomplish on game lands, so our time spent on Farm-Game projects is limited to a couple of weeks per year. I

THIS BORDER CUT was performed adjacent to a herbaceous opening to provide brush on the ground and to promote plant regeneration.

could easily keep an entire crew working on just public access program properties, if we had the equipment or manpower.

Week Three

It's surprising how many of our bluebird nesting boxes are damaged each spring by bears. I believe that the bears just coming out of their winter dens are looking for a quick meal. They must smell the birds, eggs or mouse nests in these boxes. I guess you could consider it a "box lunch." As the crews are busy servicing hundreds of these boxes on game lands, I spend most of the week inspecting timber sale sites, and areas on SGL 54 that the local sportsmen's clubs are helping us with. One area is an aspen regeneration cut for ruffed grouse being performed by the Brockway Sportsmen's Club, with the help of crew member Dave Miller. This area was a strip mine terrace long ago that had grown up in aspen and at one time had some spruce planted on it. The aspen is starting to die out from old age, and other species are taking over.

Game Commission forester Harry Rowles marked the area to be cut for aspen regeneration. Once the club completes cutting the large aspen trees, the aspen roots will send up multiple root-suckers, which in turn will develop into aspen trees and regenerate the stand. In a few years, this stand of regenerating aspen will en-



hance the area for grouse drumming sites and brood rearing.

Another site on SGL 54 is a browse cut designed to put small treetops within easy reach of deer. This cut area will provide winter food for deer as well as open up the area up to sunlight in the spring and promote regeneration of seedlings and shrubs. The Heath Township Sportsmen's Club is performing this cut. Along with the cutting, this club also plans to perform an apple tree daylight release and rejuvenate some existing food plots by planting them this spring.

Many clubs are interested in doing habitat work on game lands. The Game Commission is supportive of these projects as long as they are coordinated through the local LMO and the region office. Let me also say that these projects did not happen overnight. They took many hours of field-work, planning and meetings. Access permits are required if the work takes place behind locked gates. Volunteer liability forms need to be filled out; sketches, drawings and reports are needed if projects are funded through organizations such as the NWTF or Ruffed Grouse Society.

Sometimes agreements with sportsmen's clubs need to be drawn up and signed. I certainly don't want to discourage any club, I just want to make it clear that a lot needs to happen before anybody is allowed to grab a saw or shovel and go cut or plant. We want these projects to fit into the overall management plan for that particular game lands. In other words "let's not try to make polar bear habitat in the desert." If your club is interested in doing some habitat management work on game lands, get in touch with your local LMO months ahead of time, and he will work with you. January, for example, is a good time to start planning for spring planting of seedlings and food plots.

Week Four

The Food and Cover crews have finished servicing bluebird boxes and some

of the wood duck boxes on game lands. They are now ready to move out onto Farm-Game projects and start some of the initial work we laid out several weeks ago. The entire crew will work on these projects for several weeks. The bulk of the work is border cutting and fruit tree releases that have been approved by the landowner. Each landowner who requests habitat work must approve the work prior to us being there.

I spend most of my time this week preparing for the upcoming winter work to be performed on game lands. The work we accomplish this winter was planned last year. I also look over areas to plan for next year's work. We coordinate all of our game lands work through an annual work plan, and this is where we attempt to plan our efforts throughout the entire coming year. I am trying to put together details on habitat projects, look over project sites, previous habitat work, etc. This is the time for me to get into the field and look at items such as winter thermal cover locations, potential aspen regeneration cut areas, border cut areas, winter foods, grassy road daylights, etc. I concentrate much of my time this week on SGL 54 in northern Jefferson County.

SGL 54 is composed of more than 23,000 acres and is located within the townships of Polk, Heath and Snyder. This game lands is connected to SGL 44 at the Elk County line. The two are physically joined and have two different numbers only because the county line is also an administrative line, and represents another region. The topography of this game lands is mainly hills and valleys, some of which are quite steep. Major waterways are the Clarion River in the north, which has been classified as a Wild and Scenic River, and Toby Creek in the southwest. Both of these waterways have been the subjects of considerable clean up efforts over the last 15 years, and they both now contain good populations of many species of fish.

This game lands would be considered

“big woods” as more than 95 percent of it is wooded, containing northern hardwoods and mixed oak. Hemlock can be found along many of the wooded drainages. Being primarily big woods, good populations of deer, bears and turkeys exist here. We are also attempting to expand ruffed grouse habitat through our rotational cutting program. There are 58 miles of maintained roads, 152 acres on rotational cultivation, 45 parking lots, and more than 50 miles of boundary line maintained by Everett’s crew. This game lands hosts the site of the original Ross Leffler School of Conservation,

and the Empire Ridge access road, which is open for public travel during hunting season, and has become a favorite among hunters from all over the state.

January ends with the crews border cutting and building brushpiles on property enrolled in the Farm-Game Program, me conducting an interview for an article in the local paper, and all of us again working to finish our monthly reports. This month sure went fast as this is an extremely busy time for land management activities, but then again, we don’t really have a slow time. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Dressed in Black and White

Match the birds with the correct descriptions on the right.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| _____ Crow | T. Bluish songbird with white and black markings on wings, black bib. |
| _____ Ring-necked pheasant (male) | R. Black and white patterned bird that goes up and down tree trunks. |
| _____ Bobwhite quail | I. Long pointed tail, white ring around the neck. |
| _____ Bluejay | W. All black bird. |
| _____ Starling | N. Short stubby tail, black stripe through eye. |
| _____ Downy woodpecker | E. Black bird sprinkled with white on breast and back. |

- | | |
|---|-------|
| Which bird came from China? | _____ |
| Which bird came from Europe and is considered a pest? | _____ |
| Which bird is associated with a “covey”? | _____ |
| Which bird has a “look alike,” only larger? | _____ |

answers on p. 64

Under the Spruce Grove

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ago my husband Bruce and I planted 2,000 Norway spruce seedlings at the top of First Field and 2,000 red pine seedlings at the Far Field. The seedlings were courtesy of the Westvaco paper mill in Tyrone. The tree planter, which we hitched to our second-hand, Massey-Ferguson tractor, had been borrowed, and we had hauled it here in a friend's pickup truck.

For the first and last time in my life, I drove that tractor while Bruce sat behind on the tree planter, deftly dropping seedlings into the furrow the tree planter opened and then quickly closed. We thought we were planting a picnic grove for our old age at the top of First Field and making good use of the overgrown Far Field.

The following year all 2,000 red pine seedlings were gone — consumed by deer. But the deer were not as fond of Norway spruce, and many of them survived. Just as they reached Christmas tree size, the gypsy moth caterpillars arrived. In the spring and early summer of 1981, the 6-year-old saplings lost all their needles to the caterpillars. Our experiment in reforestation seemed to be over.

Then, most of the spruces turned green again, proving that even conifer trees, or at least Norway spruces, can grow new needles after a bout with the caterpillars. Luckily, we had only one bad infestation. After that, the survivors headed for the sky. Except for cutting one tree every year for

Christmas, we didn't thin the trees. We figured the caterpillars had done the thinning for us.

At first we were proud of our efforts. Then we learned that planting non-natives, like Norway spruces, was not what we should have done. We should have planted hemlocks or white pines. But we had been poor and those seedlings had been free.

Even though they had been planted in tree-farm rows, the caterpillar-thinning had made the soldier-straight lines into more pleasing groves. Still, because they were non-natives, I wonder what they would attract. Native birds by the score, I discovered, but as the trees grew taller and thicker, it was difficult to see the birds. I did, however, hear them: mourning doves and crows, eastern towhees and field sparrows, cedar waxwings and blue jays, black-capped chickadees, tufted titmice and dark-eyed juncos, to name just a few. Occasionally, I even saw some of those birds, and others such as white-crowned sparrows and golden-crowned kinglets.

As the years passed and the trees grew taller and thicker, ruffed grouse used them as shelter in the winter. So did the juncos. If I sat quietly in the grove near sunset on winter evenings, they zipped in over my head, so close that I felt the wind from their wings. When they saw me, they chirped from their sheltered perches deep within the spruce boughs, but they eventually settled down for the night.

The first mammals I noticed making persistent use of the grove were porcupines. In the early '90s they started thinning the edge trees by gnawing their bark and eating their needles during the winter. Most of the work was done at night, and when snow covered the ground, their furrowed tracks entered the grove from all directions. Occasionally I tracked them to their dens in hollow trees. Sometimes, when the weather was especially cold and snowy, I would find a porcupine in a spruce tree in the middle of the day. Snow revealed the presence of foxes and turkeys and even the wing marks of owls. Finding out what animals used the grove at other times of the years, however, was more difficult. Then, on the last day of August 1999, feeling exhausted and fighting a mild infection, I walked slowly to the spruce grove, carrying an inflatable pillow one of our hunter friends had given me. I stretched out under a thick bower of spruce branches and almost slept while birds sang and scolded so close that I heard their wings flapping.

Finally, I opened my eyes and tried to identify the shadowy birds in the branches. I heard chickadees, titmice, mourning doves, cedar waxwings and an incessant blue jay screaming a warning, and then a pair of cardinals and an ovenbird landed on a nearby branch and looked me over, all the while the lookout blue jay grew more insistent in its protest. Suddenly, I saw a movement over my right shoulder. Using the spruce as cover, a medium-size black bear ambled past about 30 feet away. From my supine position, I felt vulnerable, but the bear never saw me. I watched it until it exited the grove. Apparently, the blue jay had been tracking its movements across

First Field and not protesting my presence, because once the bear disappeared, the blue jay was silent.

After that, I spent more time in the spruce grove, but I saw only the expected songbirds until winter. Then, once again, the porcupines invaded. I noticed, though, as winter advanced, that not as many juncos roosted there. Often I sought refuge from rain and snow in the grove, yet neither heard nor saw any birds. Perhaps they knew, as I soon did, that feathered predators were using the grove. On January 4, 2000, I went for a walk at 4:30 p.m. and poked among the groves of spruces, looking for roosting birds. Mostly it was silent, but I did spook a few juncos. Then a barred owl erupted from the top of a spruce. No wonder it had been quiet. Although barred owls eat mostly mice and other small mammals, they also take birds as large as crows if they have the chance.

I continued monitoring the grove but saw no more owls that month. Instead, I flushed mourning doves late one afternoon and a pair of crows another. Near the end of January, as I walked along the path at the edge of the grove, an immature northern goshawk flew from the top of a 30-foot spruce tree overlooking



First Field. Near dusk Bruce saw the same bird.

Three days later, nature repeated itself. Again, I followed the trail around the edge of the spruces and again the northern goshawk erupted from the same spruce tree and flew across First Field. It paused briefly in a tree at the edge of the woods before disappearing over Laurel Ridge. Goshawks eat larger prey — rabbits, gray squirrels, ruffed grouse, crows, small hawks, owls, woodpeckers and blue jays, for instance, all of which use the spruce grove or overgrown field. A week later our son Dave found the same bird hunting over a nearby clearcut.

In the meantime, Groundhog Day arrived. It was 15 degrees and windy, and by mid-morning I was wandering through the spruce grove, looking for tracks. Suddenly, a bird fluttered off. It was about the size of a mourning dove, maybe larger, but its wings did not whistle when it flew. I had the feeling it had not left the grove, so I circled the trees from below and came into a small opening surrounded by spruces. On one tree branch I spotted a fluff of feathers. I was sure it was an owl, but what species was it? It was too large for a screech owl and too small for a great horned.

I “pished” softly and slowly its head swiveled around. At the same time its ears seemed to grow, standing up higher and higher. Its facial disks were a rusty red and between its dark eyes, there was a pattern of black and white that made it look almost cat-like. It was a long-eared owl, the first one ever recorded on our property.

I talked quietly to it while I peered at it through my binoculars. Then, still talking

as soothingly as I could, I reached down slowly to pick up my walking stick. The owl blinked sleepily. As soon as I was out of sight of the owl, I walked quickly home to tell Bruce and Dave where to find it.

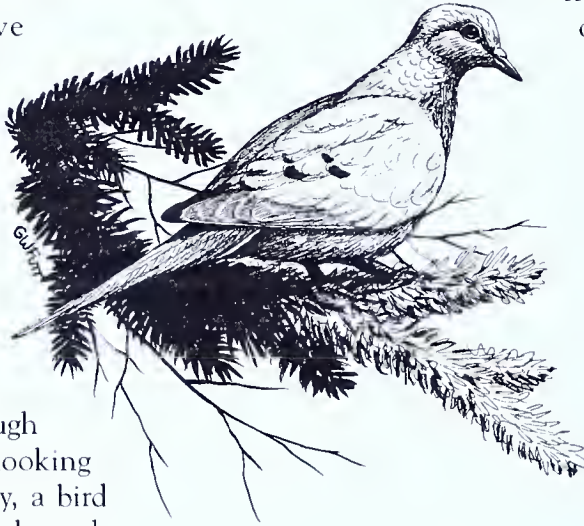
Dave set out immediately and found the owl in the same place. Bruce went up after lunch, lugging his camera and tripod, and the owl held still for him, too, as he took slides to document the 167th bird species here. I was hopeful that we might have a permanent winter resident, because long-

eared owls like dense conifer groves beside open fields. They especially like to eat deer mice, meadow voles and shrews, all of which our land supplies in abundance. Other animals they eat that live here are small birds, juvenile rabbits, star-nosed moles, long-

tailed weasels and

ruffed grouse. Because long-eared owls often roost communally in the winter, I wondered if more than one were in the spruces. Roosts typically range from two to 20 birds, although as many as 100 have been seen. Sometimes, these secretive owls that inhabit dense groves in the winter use the same groves for breeding. They often nest in crows’ nests or close to them, and I knew that crows nest in our spruce grove even though I had never seen a nest.

Long-eared owls, according to the newly published *The Birds of Pennsylvania* by Gerald M. McWilliams and Daniel W. Brauning, “are rare and local breeding residents . . . They are rarely reported during the breeding season and are easily overlooked because of their strictly nocturnal habits.” McWilliams and Brauning also claim that even winter sightings are



rare and those are mostly east in the Piedmont or on the Lake Erie shore.

Last winter, though, long-eared owls were all over the commonwealth. "Local Notes," in the *Pennsylvania Birds* journal, reported them in Chester, Bucks, Montgomery, Philadelphia, Dauphin, Northampton, Somerset, Venango, and Juniata counties. Best of all were the sightings in Berks County. They included one owl that roosted in a hemlock grove and another two to six owls in a Scotch pine planting. But most unusual were the three owls that chose the rafters of the Kutztown Produce Auction building — a long, single story, rectangular shed with a couple open sides. Those owls even sat still during an auction!

Perhaps I shouldn't feel bad that even though I ranged back and forth through the spruce grove day after day, I never located the long-eared owl again. I assumed

that it had left after only a short visit. But at the end of April, underneath a maze of tall, thick spruces, our son Steve discovered dozens of owl pellets filled with the tiny bones and skulls of mice and voles. A study of captive long-eared owls found that one owl produced two pellets a day in the winter. So the long-eared owl must have been in the grove for several weeks, no doubt holding as still as it did in the Kutzdown building.

I no longer feel guilty about planting Norway spruce trees. They obviously provide excellent cover for a wide range of birds and mammals. And a biologist told me that of all the non-natives you can plant, Norway spruces are the least objectionable because they rarely spread beyond where they are planted. That was all the encouragement I needed to spend even more guilt-free time under our spruce grove. ☐

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Straight from the Bowstring

By P. J. Reilly

Taking a turkey with a firearm is a notable accomplishment; doing it with archery equipment is the ultimate challenge.

Bowhunting for Turkeys

IF BOWHUNTING is considered by many to be the most challenging way to hunt, and turkeys are considered by many to be the most challenging game to hunt, then bowhunting for turkeys can be considered hunting's ultimate challenge. Taking a spring gobbler with a bow and arrow is like earning a PhD in bowhunting.

Consider this: For a spring gobbler, an archer must get within spittin' distance of a critter that has eyesight so keen it seems

it can see you blink at 100 yards. Then, the hunter has to draw a bow, take aim and release an arrow, all without being seen. You think a deer moves with lightning quickness when it "jumps the string." You should see how fast a turkey can duck an arrow at close range.

When a deer detects something out of the ordinary in its home environment, it sometimes will freeze in its tracks until it can figure out what's wrong, giving a hunter a window of opportunity to get off a shot. Turkeys just beat it out of there. They fly or run first and ask questions later, so to speak.

Let's face facts. It's tough even getting within shotgun range to kill a turkey. Getting within bow range and making a killing shot is that much more difficult. But



TAKING a spring gobbler with archery gear is like earning a PhD in bowhunting. Safety is of the utmost importance when turkey hunting. During the spring season, when moving, turkey hunters must wear at least 100 square inches of fluorescent orange on the head, or in such a manner so that it is visible from all directions. While fluorescent orange is not required at stationary calling locations, it's strongly recommended.

it's not impossible. With a lot of luck, and by taking certain precautions, you can earn your PhD in bowhunting.

We're not going to waste time here talking about scouting for turkeys. We all know how important that is. No, we're going to spend time talking about the two keys to successfully bagging a spring tom with a bow and arrow: equipment and concealment.

There is some specialized equipment bowhunters should consider adding to their arsenal before heading afield for turkeys, as opposed to simply taking out the deer gear. To start, let's look at the bow. If you shoot a compound, you can take the same one you use for deer hunting, but you might want to think about making a few modifications.

First of all, with turkeys being nervous birds, you'd be wise to lower your bow's draw weight to a setting at which you can hold a full draw for a good three minutes. When you're bowhunting for turkeys, you have to draw when the bird absolutely cannot see you. This might be when the gobbler is behind a tree or other obstruction, or when it's in full strut and facing directly away from you, so that its fan covers its head.

Ideally, the turkey will offer you a good, clean shot within seconds after you draw. However, we all know how rare the ideal situation arises when bowhunting. Chances are, you might have to hold that string back and remain rock steady for an extended period, while waiting for the turkey to take that last step into the killing zone.

When I hunt deer my bow is set at 70 pounds. There's no way I can hold that for even one minute. I like to cut it back to about 50 pounds for turkeys. I can comfortably hold that weight at full draw for up to three minutes.

If you hunt with a longbow or recurve that has a heavy draw weight, you might want to switch to a lighter bow for turkeys, assuming that's financially feasible.

For compound bowhunters, you might

also want to add an overdraw to your bow before a turkey hunt. The overdraw, which is a shelf fitted with an arrow rest that extends back from the riser toward the string, allows you to shoot shorter, lighter arrows. Shorter arrows are much easier to maneuver in the thick cover you'll be hiding in when you're hunting turkeys. (More on that later.) And, the lighter arrow weight should compensate for the reduction in draw weight. Your arrows will still fly relatively flat, even though you've cut back the draw poundage.

Any broadhead you use to hunt deer will do the job on a turkey as well, but there are specialized tips made just for turkeys. These heads are fitted with what's called a turkey spur. It's a metal wing sticking out from the cutting blades that actually impedes penetration. That might sound strange, but think about how many times you've shot regular broadheads completely through a deer. Imagine how fast that arrow would zip through something the size of a turkey.

And while a deer will often run after having been shot with an arrow, leaving a blood trail to follow, a turkey can fly off without leaving a trail. Many bowhunters have lost birds that flew off after they were shot.

The turkey spur heads work to keep that arrow from passing all the way through a turkey. A gobbler hit with one of these heads might still be able to fly, but it's going to be a lot tougher with an arrow stuck in it. Also, the spur causes more internal damage than blades alone.

Decoys are essential for the turkey bowhunter. Why? A decoy gives an approaching gobbler something to focus on, so he's not looking for you. If it's not too cumbersome, you'd do well to carry a hen and a jake decoy. This tandem seems to really draw in a hot gobbler who becomes intent on running off the competition.

A turkey's eyes are its number one line of defense against predators. To get a turkey, you have to beat its eyes. And to do

that, you have to hide. Proper concealment for a bowhunt for turkeys starts with camouflage clothing.

You need to cover yourself from head to toe, including your face and hands. There can be no exposed skin that might flash at an inopportune time. Try to wear camouflage that has a lot of varying light and dark patterns. This will break up your outline much better than a pattern that's mostly light or mostly dark.

I know several guys who bowhunt for turkeys while wearing several different types of camouflage at the same time. The upper body is covered in one pattern, while the lower body sports another. These guys swear this trick really helps them blend in with their surroundings.

Don't forget, however, when moving, spring turkey hunters must wear at least 100 square inches of fluorescent orange on the head, or in such a manner that it's visible from all directions.

Don't forget about your bow and arrows when you're preparing your camouflage. Use a drab-colored spray paint to cover any shiny metal parts, like the limb bolts, sights, rest and quiver. At some point during a bowhunt for turkeys, you know your bow is going to have to move when you draw it back, so you want to make certain it's well concealed.

Now that you and your bow are camouflaged, it's time to find a good place in the woods to set up. Most shotgun hunters simply look for a large tree in the open woods to sit against when they're spring gobbler hunting. That won't do for bowhunters. A turkey will spot you in such a place from a mile away when you draw your bow. You have to get in the thick stuff.

In the Pennsylvania mountains, there's no better cover for bowhunters than laurel. A tangled mass of laurel provides the perfect hideout for a bowhunter waiting to ambush a passing turkey. As turkey hunters, we know turkeys generally don't hang out in laurel patches. What you want to find is a patch that's surrounded or at least

bordered by the open woods turkeys like. When the gobbler comes through the woods toward your calls, you can shoot it from your "nest."

Field edges are also good bets for turkey bowhunters. Some brushy cover that can hide a hunter almost always borders mountain fields where gobblers like to strut and gather hens. Also, if you've ever looked at a field edge in the early morning sunlight, there are a lot of shadows hunters can use to their advantage. While the field is aglow with light as the sun rises, the woods tend to be darker. And anything you can do to avoid that turkey's keen eyesight is a good tactic.

You can also use the terrain of your turkey hunting woods to your advantage. Generally, always try to set up above the area where you expect the turkeys to be. A gobbler walking down a hill toward you is a tough critter to draw a bow on.

Now let's talk safety for a minute. As you've probably noticed, the bowhunting setup for turkeys conflicts with one of the leading safety rules of thumb for turkey hunting. That rule is to set up in the open with your back propped against a large tree. You want to be able to see other hunters as they approach, and you want to be out in the open to reduce the chance that an approaching hunter will mistake a movement by you for a turkey. If you're tucked into a thicket, and an approaching hunter hears your calls and then sees an obscured part of your body move, he might think he's looking at a turkey.

So what do you do? Placing a large orange band around a tree in your immediate area will tell most hunters that there's another hunter around. Many hunters think the band might spook a gobbler but, generally, turkeys are frightened off more by movement than a bright color. I'd rather scare a bird away and be safe, anyway.

If you're looking for hunting's ultimate challenge this spring, try hunting a gobbler with your bow, and you just might earn your PhD in bowhunting. □

Ballistics as a technical art has existed for thousands of years, but modern technology has made figuring it out much easier for the average shooter.

Exterior Ballistics

HOW CAN anyone figure out what is happening to a bullet in flight when it can't be seen? This question has been asked thousands of times through the years. Before sophisticated instruments were available for measuring the speed of a bullet, gunsmiths and rifle builders didn't know much about what was happening to the bullet from the time it left the muzzle until it reached the target. They certainly were aware that more powder increased velocity, but they had no way of knowing just how fast the bullet traveled.

I won't get into the history of the chronograph but, like most inventions, it developed over a long period of time. The early rifle builders fired into wood or steel for penetration purposes. This would indicate, to some extent, the speed of a bullet, but nothing about how fast in feet per second. The chronograph evolved from a fairly large and complex machine to an accurate, digital pocket-size instrument.

With the Oehler Model 43 Personal Ballistic Laboratory (PBL) it's possible to obtain chamber pressure, instrumental velocity and, when the Acoustic Target is used, the time of flight, downrange velocity, and the ballistic coefficient of each bullet fired. The 43 PBL with the Acoustic Target is not inexpensive, but many benchrest rifles and custom scoped varmint rifles carry a higher price tag.

Admittedly, the shooter of today has a greater understanding of both interior and exterior ballistics. When home reloading tools entered the scene shortly after World War II, few reloading manuals or ballistic charts were available to help the new handloader. Much of what I learned in the early 1950s came by word of mouth. One handloader passed loading data on to another. I still find notepads from relatives listing favorite loads for a half-dozen cartridges. The only manual I have from that era is a *Gelding & Mull Handbook* dated 1950. Yet, with all the data and computer programs now on the market, the science of exterior ballistics is still somewhat of a mystery.

To avoid getting bundles of mail telling me that ballistics is a relatively new science, I want to point out that ballistics has existed as a technical art for thousands of years. The word ballistic can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, who recorded designs about "throwing" machines (catapults). This may date back as far as 300 B.C. Even the Stone Age warriors are believed to have known about devices that would hurl stones and other projectiles far beyond the reach of the human arm. Figuring out a device to throw a large rock a hundred yards is not exactly the science of exterior ballistics; however, it was the beginning.

The true development of ballistics actually started after black powder was invented, and it was done mostly by the military. Names of a few of the great scientists from the distant past are still in common use. Tartaglia, Galileo, Newton, Leonardo da Vinci were involved, and we must not forget the inventor of gunpowder (or at least he is given credit for it), Friar Francis Bacon.



BALLISTIC COEFFICIENT (BC) reflects the bullet's ability to overcome air resistance. Mathematically, it's the ratio of the sectional density of the bullet to its coefficient of form. The BC of a bullet is pretty much determined by its shape.

Warfare was a way of life for hundreds of years before Bacon wrote his famous "black dust" formula. When the military discovered the potential the black mixture had for hurling projectiles, kings and rulers became more than remotely interested. Back then — like today — armies with the best weapon technology win battles.

Tartaglia may have been the first to write about ballistics. He reasoned in the early 1500s that the trajectory of a bullet was a continuous curve. A hundred or so years later, Galileo did his often disputed experiment of dropping two lead balls of different weights from the Leaning Tower

of Pisa. When both balls hit the ground at approximately the same time, he concluded that the acceleration of a falling body by gravity is constant, or that a heavier-than-air object is subject to constant acceleration. The results from this test led him to believe that a bullet's trajectory was a curve called a parabola. That might have been true if the bullet would have been traveling in a vacuum, but he didn't figure aerodynamic forces into his analysis.

This bit of history should show that early gun makers and shooters were perplexed about the flight of the unseen bullet. They probably learned in a hurry that elevating the muzzle slightly added more range to a bullet. These experimenters were at a real disadvantage because they had little, if any, ballistic equipment to work with.



I vividly recall old gun catalogs that included penetration data in their advertising. For instance, a certain .25-20 brand of ammo would penetrate X number of 3/4-inch pine boards. Even though they showed a muzzle velocity reading for the cartridge, the prospective purchaser had a better understanding of its power by knowing something of its penetration potential.

Sierra's *50th Anniversary Edition for Rifle Reloading* says that the development of ballistics as a true science began about the time firearms were introduced into warfare in western Europe, near the beginning of the 15th century.

Sir Isaac Newton is credited with being the greatest scientist of his time (some claim he was the greatest of all time). He established physical laws and mathematical techniques that are the basis for several branches of science, ballistics included. Newton was interested in air drag. He performed experiments on the drag impact on pellets falling through air and liquid. He was able to show that the drag on a pellet increases with the density of the air or liquid.

There's a great deal of discussion today about ballistic coefficients. The BC of a bullet is pretty much determined by its shape. But this can be confusing. What are we to think when bullets of different weights or different calibers have the same ballistic coefficient? Do they produce the same ballistics?

For a general comparison, let's assume the bullets have equal muzzle velocities. Sierra's *50th Edition* says that they have equal drag deceleration, and that they slow down equally fast. If bullets start with equal muzzle velocities, they'll have equal velocities, equal time of flight and equal drops at any range. However, unless they have equal weights, they will have different energy output. Because energy is proportionate to weight, the heavier bullet will have proportionately more energy at any range.

For many years, the ballistic coefficient of a bullet required the use of calculus, a subject most of us do not understand. It used to be a long, tedious procedure to figure the BC of a bullet. But there is always that tinkering mind. Eventually, someone decided there had to be a better method, and that someone was an Italian ballistician named Siacci. He discovered that the ballistics of an actual bullet could be computed in a simple way from the ballistics of the standard bullet.

The standard bullet theory came into existence a few decades ago, when commercial ammunition makers decided on a standard model to describe the exterior ballistic performance of sporting ammuni-

tion. They chose a drag function of G1 to represent typical performance of sporting ammo. While the G1 drag function sounds a bit confusing, it's only a table showing how fast the standard projectile is losing velocity versus the momentary velocity of the projectile.

Here's how it works. If a tested bullet loses velocity twice as fast as does the standard bullet, it has a BC of $1/2$ or 0.500. If it's three times as fast, the BC is $1/3$ or .333. To measure the BC, it's imperative to know both how fast the bullet is going and how fast it's losing velocity. Suppose your bullet exits the muzzle at 2,500 fps and loses 312 fps at 100 yards. The standard bullet loses only 84 fps starting at the same velocity under the same atmospheric conditions. The BC of your bullet is $84/312$, or 0.269.

Because I can't believe that anything with math is simple, I'm thankful that the Oehler Model 43 Personal Ballistic Laboratory (PBL) (must be used in conjunction with a computer) figures the ballistic coefficient when used with the Oehler Acoustic Target. Three microphones on the Acoustic triangle pick up the mach cone or sonic boom of the bullet and send the ballistic coefficient, downrange velocity, and time of flight back to the PBL, which then sends it to the computer. The Acoustic Target also measures group sizes. The PBL itself measures chamber pressure, instrumental velocity, standard deviation and other ballistic information.

We've come a long way from the days of Tartaglia, Galileo, Newton and other names buried in history, but we owe them a debt of gratitude just the same. Without their mathematical calculations and crude experiments, we might not have pocket-size chronographs and an instrument that measures chamber pressure, calculates the ballistic coefficient, and gives the time of flight of the unseen bullet. For poor souls like me who find simple math challenging, the Model 43 PBL is a lifesaver. □

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

A bowhunter from Lakeland, Florida bagged a state record white-tailed deer during a special hunt on the Green Swamp Wildlife Management Area in September 1999. The buck's 57⁷/₈ inches of non-typical points garnered it a Boone and Crockett score of 206 points — a record for a whitetail in velvet. The deer had 25 points with a greatest spread of 24¹/₈ inches.

Wisconsin's gray wolf population has grown to between 248 and 259 animals. It's likely that the Department of Natural Resources will initiate action to remove the wolf from the state endangered and threatened species list.

Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) unveiled its Millennium Grove of Famous and Historic Trees program last year in the Capitol Complex in Harrisburg. DCNR officials included a "moon sycamore," named for a tree derived from seeds carried by astronaut Stuart Roosa to the moon in 1971. Other trees include: the George Washington Tulip Poplar, grown from seeds of the tree planted in 1785 by Washington at Mount Vernon; Clara Barton Redbuds; and an oak grown from the seeds of a small stand of trees that grow along Cemetery Ridge in the Gettysburg National Military Park.

In 1999, hunters in North Dakota took 956 swans, the second highest harvest in the past 12 years. Since the first season in 1988, the harvests have averaged 745 birds per year.

Hunting license sales increased in 25 states, declined in 24 and one had no change in 1998. According to the USFWS, 14,891,855 hunting licenses were purchased — down slightly from the 14,906,826 in 1997. Hunting license sales have declined in nine of the last 10 years. Pennsylvania — the only state with more than a million license holders, had a two percent drop in 1998.

Spring "singing ground" surveys performed by the USFWS suggest that eastern woodcock numbers have been declining an average of 2.6 percent per year since 1968. It's believed that losses to development and changes due to maturation of abandoned farmland are the main causes of the decline. Researchers in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Pennsylvania have been monitoring woodcock fitted with radios on hunted and nonhunted sites for the past two years. Results so far have shown that survival rates on hunted sites averaged 71 percent in 1998 and 70 percent in 1999. Survival rates on nonhunted sites were 69 percent in 1998 and 67 percent in 1999. Mortality on nonhunted sites was due primarily to avian and mammalian predation.

Answers: W, I, N, T, E, R.

Ring-necked pheasant, starling, bob-white quail, downy woodpecker.

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Girio Brummett, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. New to Pennsylvania, coyotes are cloaked in mystique. Some people despise them for their predatory habits, others admire them for their intelligence, adaptability and tenacity.



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PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS

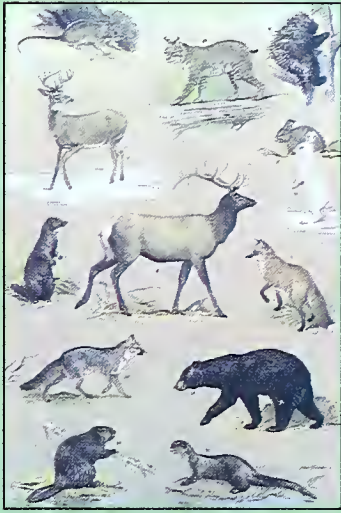
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COVER PAINTING BY KEN HUNTER

(Cover story on p. 46)

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Hunting & Shooting Up

THE NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION (NSSF), in cooperation with Responsive Management, a public opinion research firm, has been conducting a survey of hunting and shooting sports participation every five years since 1986. According to the most recent survey, hunters and target shooters are hunting and shooting more than they were five years ago, and they're spending more, too.

More specifically, most of the hunters surveyed indicated that they hunted about the same number of days in 1999 as they did in previous years. Twenty-four percent said they hunted more in 1999, up from 16 percent in 1995. For target shooting, 77 percent said they participated in target shooting in 1999, up from the 55 percent in 1995.

As for purchases, 72 percent of the respondents said they had purchased a rifle within the past five years and 75 percent had purchased a shotgun, both up substantially from 1995, when the purchase figures were 44 percent for rifles and 41 percent for shotguns.

Other highlights of the '99 survey are: 49 percent of the respondents had been hunting or shooting for 21 to 40 years; 34 percent for less than 21. Almost all (94 percent) of the respondents had hunted in each of the past 5 years, and for those who had not, the reasons were: lack of time, 24 percent; being too young, 15 percent; health, 13 percent; and work obligations, 13 percent.

Another part of the survey had to do with difficulties hunters encounter and if those difficulties had become greater over the past five years. Not surprisingly, access to hunting was the most common, mentioned by 33 percent of the respondents, the same as it was in 1995, but up from 1991. (36 percent — a percentage that has remained constant since 1986 — own land where they can hunt.) Anti-hunting activities and the anti-hunting attitude of the public are two growing problems perceived by hunters. Less of a problem are the availability of game, cost of ammunition and licenses, and safety.

As for game, more respondents (92 percent) reported hunting deer over the past five years than any other species. Since these surveys started there has been a consistent increase in the percentage of hunters who hunt deer and turkeys. For most small game and waterfowl, there had been declines in hunter participation, but they increased in 1999.

An interesting part of the survey has to do with firearm ownership. Of the respondents, 88 percent own at least one shotgun; 46 percent own two to four; 32 percent, at least five, and 10 percent, one. For centerfire rifles, 83 percent of the respondents own at least one; 39 percent, two to four; 28 percent, at least five; and 16 percent, one. Since 1995, the ownership of a single shotgun or centerfire rifle has decreased, indicating that more than ever, hunters are using different firearms for different types of hunting.

When it comes to reloading, 41 percent of the respondents reload their own ammunition. Since 1986, this percentage has increased, but not steadily, and while most shooters reload because it's more economical, since 1995 the percentages of those who reload because (they feel) the ammo is more accurate and that reloading is enjoyable have been increasing.

Presented here were just a few highlights from a comprehensive detailed report. For additional information, contact the NSSF at 11 Mile Hill Road, Newtown, CT 06470-2359 — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

The Field Note by WCO Bower in the December issue caught my eye because the same thing happened to me. I had a 3- x 20-foot sheet of plastic around some new grapevines, and one day in early fall I watched as a woodchuck chewed it in half and then drug a piece down its hole. The next day it took the other half.

W. KACZMARZYK,
HORNELL, NY

Editor:

I recently moved to New York after being a resident of Pennsylvania for the first 28 years of my life. Fortunately, I still live close enough that I can hunt in PA. As a nonresident, my licenses cost close to \$200, and I feel they are worth every penny.

My wife recently purchased me a 3-year subscription to *Game News*, and I always read it from cover to cover. I remember reading it at my grandparents' house as a child, and it is still the best magazine by far.

D. MAUREY,
SAVONA, NY

Editor:

Over the years Bob Sopchick's stories have either put a tear in my eye, a lump in my throat or a chill up my spine. His December story, "The Good Shot," did all three.

R. SUPINSKY
RIVERHEAD, NY

Editor:

WCO Bill Ragosta's "A Dirty Job," in the September

issue, made no mention of the penalties handed out to the individuals caught with illegally taken deer. That, coupled with the fact that one of the violators was caught again with illegal deer (5), leads me to believe that penalties are too lenient. I feel more severe penalties may be the only way to get some violators' attention and reverse the lawless attitude exhibited here.

B. DENGLER,
NORMAN, OK

Editor:

Reading Marcia Bonta's "Visiting Old Growth" in the September issue, I found it refreshing to learn that in today's rapidly changing world such wild, untouched places remain in Penn's Woods. However, it is heartbreaking to see the loss of eastern hemlocks across eastern Pennsylvania, due to the introduced woolly adelgid and scale insects. Living in southeastern York County, I can attest to how the vast majority of old growth and second growth hemlock stands along the lower Susquehanna have been reduced to dead and dying trees.

E.P. JORDAN
AIRVILLE

Editor:

Really enjoyed Len Groshek's Field Note in the September issue. Len does a

fine job with youngsters in his presentations, and Tom Sabolcik provides an unforgettable presentation when he tags a live bear for our students. LMO John Dzemyan has been presenting a program on deer habitat to our fourth grade students for nine years, and with the patience he has, I think he would make an excellent teacher.

The fourth grade teachers from Port Allegany would like to thank all these men for the fine job they do every year.

M. WILSON,
FOURTH LEVEL TEACHER
SMETHPORT

Editor:

I was deer hunting on SGL 42 in Westmoreland County when I saw what I thought was a turkey walking toward me. As it got closer, I saw that it was too low to the ground and had a white neck, and that it was propelling itself on top of the several inches of snow.

It turned out to be a common loon. I thought about trying to capture it, but I was alone and not sure I could handle it. It was headed directly toward a creek that would take it to the Ligonier Township reservoir, where I hoped it would find room to taxi off and get airborne.

R.L. WEIMER,
LATROBE

**Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters,"
2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.
Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.**

Last Grouse for Joey's Hero

By Joe Parry

THOSE THINGS your mentor or children accomplish in life seem so much more important than your own accomplishments. At least it was in this storybook hunt with a grandfather who approached holiness. A grand old man who was a close and constant companion to goodness in all aspects of his simple life, a softhearted man who seemed to enjoy the simple act of loving his fellow man, especially children. To the minds of many families in Greensburg years ago, if ever there was a Santa Claus, old Joe was that man.

A certain young man was blessed to have known him, blessed to have his magical love and gentle teachings mold him as a boy. Blessed to have him teach the ways of a caring, thoughtful, and ethical hunter: virtues that remain with him today at 57 years of age.

Then, one day in August 1960, at the time a young man in the Army, he was beyond brokenhearted to the extreme sense of the emotion, to have carried him to his grave. As his grandson, his namesake, the young man lived to hear his grandfather speak, lived to learn his lessons of life and, yes, lived for those soft, lazy October days in the grouse woods of Westmoreland County.

When Grandpa Joe, his father, Frank, and another hero, an uncle, Buck Budd, of south Connellsville, shared the joys of the hunt together in undiluted happiness, the environ-

ment around these four hunting men was never, never cold.

When the old man passed over to the other side, the joyous times seemed to dissolve. The young man continued to hunt, of course, but alone and lonely for Grandpa Joe. I doubt he'll ever forget the golden memory of one autumn hunt, the time Grandpa took grouse doubles with his old Fox Sterlingworth 16-gauge double. His grandson was just 16, the proud new owner of a flashy 1951 Chevy Deluxe coupe. The small game season opener seemed forever in coming, but finally the morning arrived with the young man raring to go.

The youngster's father, having coffee with his brother-in-law, Buck Budd, said to him as he entered the warm kitchen, "Joey, it's about time to go get your grandfather. How'd you like to go pick him up in your hotrod?"

"I'd love to, Pap. Did ya tell him what time we'd be startin' the hunt?"

"Yep, he should be bright-eyed and bushytailed."

As the young man pulled into his grandfather's driveway the moon shone brightly, illuminating the large backyard. He rolled down his car window, noticing a bright shining spot moving about the lawn. It was Grandpa's bald head, radiating like a mobile crystal ball, and the young man called as softly as possible, not wanting to wake his grandmother, or his Aunt Isabel and Uncle Marsh, who lived in the apartment above his grandfather's garage. "Is that you over there, Grandpa?"

The kindly elder hollered back in bro-



ken Italian, "Yes, yes, attsa me alright. Who in da hecksa you tink it is, a Sandy Claus in da huntin' suit you big Too-Too?" He forever referred to the youngster as his big or little Too-Too, an affectionate handle that meant something only to the old man. "Ittsa bouta time you gotta here. I've been a waitin' someting like 20 minoots already. Where'sa you daddy, Joey?" he asked as he walked toward the car.

There were no fluorescent orange regulations in those days and, innocently, hunters assumed red was a safe color to wear. Grandpa was completely clad in black and red clothing. From riding britches type pants to thigh-length jacket to Elmer Fudd type hat. He looked like a billboard ad for the Woolrich company, but yes, the most atypical looking grandfather God ever created.

He forever wore a warm smile on his pristine face, and that "lightbulb" of a head always smelled of Mennen's Skin

Bracer cologne. The young grandson never tired of seeing his grandfather and always felt those joyous butterflies in his stomach whenever his grandfather entered a room. It was, to this day, the deepest love the young man ever felt for another human being.

He never thought, then, that time would one day remove this man from his life. Still, he seemingly knew enough to enjoy and make the best of every moment with the old man, especially in the woods, where joys came in bunches like wild grapes. Where grandfather and grandson would talk softly and summon past golden memories to fill the odd voids in a morning. Or the two would whip up a fresh

batch to add to the vast, precious store they already shared, ones they'd already made together.

On the way to the boy's home, toward hunting fields abundant with pheasants and thickets alive with ruffed grouse, the boy and his grandfather talked of another time, the time when his grandfather came to America.

"Why did you come to America, Grandpap, didn't you like the old country?"

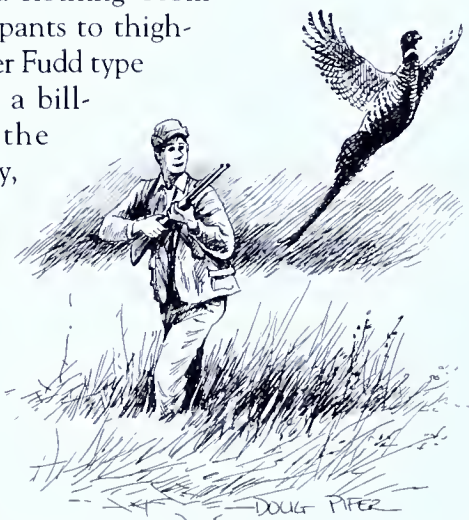
The old-timer gently smacked his palms on his woolen-covered thighs, laughed a gentle, tolerant laugh and

said, "Joey, I hears so much abouta tings inna dis a country. Da freedoms, da nice a jobs for people inna which a you no needa education. An I have only a two years a school, you know. Things over dare were notta so good den. Money was a hard a to come by, and I tink a one day when I talka to my

momma I say, 'I go to America da beautiful anna make some monies anna send a somma back to my family.'

"I was only 14 den, inna 1903, when I take a da bigga boat from da old country to a beautiful, Missa Liberty statue. I remember like a yesterday, Joey. I cried like a leedle bambino when I see da beautiful Missa Liberty. I was a so proud, anna yetta so scared that I gotta sick juste before da boat tie up onna dock. Oh boy, Joey, your grandpap wassa so proud. Juste like he issa today, my son. You grandpap, he's a proud of his children anna you, Joey, my good Too-Too grandson."

From the moment he landed on Ellis Island, the old man never spoke Italian in public, and he flew the American flag high



and proud on a galvanized pole he'd made and placed near the front porch of his beautiful brick home in Greensburg. And later on his sons took part in World War II. One son, the young man's father, Frank, received among other metals, six bronze stars in the European theatre of operations, some for landing on Utah Beach on D-Day and overtaking enemy machine guns in the cement bunkers in the walls of the cliffs.

"I never forget how I felt when I hearda abouta a hunting for game here in America," the old man continued as they drove to the youngster's country home. "I think I could feed a family for free iffa tings gotta really bad, you know. But, you grandpap wassa wrong abouta dat, for sure. I didn't know anyting abouta hunting. Shoot, I did notta even a have da gun, and when I got to dis country, I only hadda someting like \$17. Boy, at wassa lots of monies in doze times, but I needed a job bad. I finally gotta one wit Baltimore Life Insurance Company and didda real good. Well, den, Joey, I meeta you grandma, Mary. We gotta married, buy da bigga house and make a family. American family. You daddy wassa my third born outta five children, three girls, two crazy little boys."

He told the youngster how he'd bought the Fox Sterlingworth on payments for \$39. Today that shotgun's worth more than \$2,000, but it's destined for another young man, the 25-year-old son of the youngster in this story.

He looked to the lighted front porch as they pulled into the driveway and laughed that heartwarming laugh of his when he spotted the boy's uncle, Buck Budd, and his own son, Frankie. "Looka uppa dare atta those two big Too-Toos. Boy a boy, dey tink dey bigga shots wit da fancy guns. We show 'em, huh, Too-Too?"

He pointed to the men on the front porch, "You grandpap issa gonna show dem today who da hunter is, by golly, how's abouta dat, Too-Too? Whada you tink, a grandpap teach dem boys a how ta shoots grouse, huh?"

"Yes I think so, Grandpap. I sure think you should, too. I get sick of them teasing me about missing grouse, so maybe you can show them. I hope you shoot two on a single flush." The young man had little doubt regarding his grandfather showing up the younger hunters, even though both were excellent wingshooters. But doubles on grouse? Hardly.

The grandfather laughed that incredible laugh of his as he exited the old Chevy. "I'mma lucky if I even a bend a feather onna doggone grouse bird. Dey too daggonnit fast for you old grandpa, Joey."

The boy told his grandfather not to worry about being too old for the speeding grouse. Just point the magical Fox, swing through the birds and touch the trigger, or triggers, should two flush at once.

After a breakfast of strong coffee with a splash of Italian annisette flavoring, toast drenched in Grandma's home-churned butter, and concord grape jam and a quarter-dozen fried brown eggs each, the anxious foursome left by way of the back door to their few acres of rabbit and ringneck turf. The four paired off, Buck and the young man's father, and Joey and his smiling grandfather.

"You bigga shots tink you gonna beat da two Joes, but you see whose da hunters are in dis family by goodness." Grandfather was in high spirits that day, alive with enthusiasm, young at heart with anticipation and determination, even at the vintage age of 69.

"C'mon, Too-Too, we go dissa way, through da high buffalo grasses, anna mebbe kick 'em up da doggone ringaneck."

The youngster seemed to catch the fever that was overwhelming his grandfather, trying all the way through a grove of pines to get his churning stomach and excitement under con-

trol. For all of them back then, the first day of small game season was like Christmas.

"I saw a flock of birds in that high buffalo grass just at the edge of the apple orchard the other evening, Grandpap. Three ringnecks and six hens. Saw a bunch of quail, too. Are you gonna shoot a few of those today?"

The old-timer, smiling from ear to ear, whispered, "Joey, we take a leedle of dis, a leedle of a dat, anna just so long as a we get enough for a nice Sunday dinner, anna beat doze smart alecka Buck anna you daddy, I donna care whata we shoota today."

The young man said he was anxious to make a good kill for a big Sunday dinner at Grandma's, where all the family members and a few close friends got together about two Sundays a month.

They'd play penny poker, drink light, homemade wines sparingly, and eat as though tomorrow may never come. Grandma didn't believe in several course meals; she made at least a half-dozen different main dishes. The family would love and enjoy one another in the most heartwarming manner. In such a deep, sincere way, the young man carries that precious memory in his heart to this day, because, sadly, most of the people who made them what they were have since changed worlds.

The two Joes had no sooner entered the orchard edge than two pheasants, a hen and a rooster, flushed from the high sienna grasses. The old man had the shot, and as the old Fox popped, the ringneck slid into the pine grove and dropped to earth, stone dead. "Hey, dare, Too-Too, whaddy tink of a dat shoodin'?"

They crossed an old road at the edge of their property then navigated a steep bank into some brush and thornapple trees that were entangled

in the multiflora rose. A single ringneck burst from the tangles and seemingly got hung up in the lower thornapple branches. His grandfather waited until the bird freed itself and reached the apex of its flight, then he let loose with the right barrel of his Fox, getting his second pheasant of the day.

"Now, Too-Too, we go for da big bunny or two, okeedokey?"

And sure, it was "okeedokey." Everything his gentle grandfather did was okay with him.

As they approached the wood's edge, a ruffed grouse burst from the multiflora rose. The boy shouldered his tightly choked, liberated German 16-gauge side-by-side and cut loose. First the right barrel, then left, but he didn't ruffle a feather.

"Attsa okay, Too-Too, they's a doggone buggers to hit. Be nice if dey was leedie bit more slow."

As yet, with lunchtime about an hour away, the boy and his grandfather didn't recall hearing any shots from the other side of the hill, and between them they had taken four rabbits, two ringnecks and five quail. On the last bench before the hill topped out, a sizable wild grape tangle appeared. The grandfather hollered over to the boy, "Joey, you step along easy now anna stop every couple steps anna stand a real quiet. Dat make dem doggonit birds a real nervous."

The boy replied in the affirmative and into the thicket they went. He couldn't see his grandpa but he could hear him hollering, "C'monna you doggonit crazy birds, old Joe here will show you whooza da boss."

It wasn't long until he heard a single shot then heard his grandfather yelling again. "Boy oh boy, Too-Too, dem sings fly like leedle jet airplanes. I tink I missed da bigga one, too." Just about the time the cover wore thin, and lunchtime but moments away, he heard the old man's Fox bark twice. Surprised at how close together the shots were, the boy, after field-dressing a big fox squirrel he'd just taken, ambled



over to join his grandpa. There, sitting on a stump, he spotted his grandfather, smoothing the feathers of two plump grouse, tears in his warm eyes, and the smile of all smiles on his immaculate face.

Two ringnecks, three quail, three rabbits, a brace of gray squirrels and two grouse. To the boy's eyes it looked like the harvest of an early market hunter and he was, once again, impressed by his grandfather's proficiency with the old shotgun.

"Well, Too-Too, we better be goin' anna have a somma lunch. You tink a we make dem hot shots looka bad enough?"

Not long ago, the young man now much older, summoned the memory of that morning, recalling his grandfather's sheepish, ornery laughter. "Well, by golly, Joey, I guessa you grandpa issa da old superman after all. W hadda does Too-Too tink?"

At the house during lunch that day they shared many laughs and, indeed, the old man had topped all of the young men. But it never really mattered, not to Grandpap. He just enjoyed making a grand time of everything in life, making certain all the world around him was happy. He always said how rich he was because of the people he'd made happy.

The young man not long ago recalled

his grandfather's words one lonely, melancholy day as he sat on a mountainside in Tioga county.

"Joey, azza long azz you always make a da peoples round you happy, God will take a gooda care of you. Remember dat, Too-Too, for your old grandpap, please a remember dat, anna always remember to take a you kids onna hunting trips like we share alla dissa time, okay? Cause dat time inna woods make a dem a good, anna happy kids for you. Anna it a brings you closer to dare young hearts, you know?"

Three years later the old man passed away. In the one year he hunted after the one in this story he never killed another ringneck, quail, rabbit, squirrel or grouse. He mentioned one autumn day that he was through taking life, but so loved the hunts of autumn. And he'd given his life to so many who will forever remember him as a saint of a man, a sort of Santa Claus. And not just during Christmas, but everyday he happened to gently touch their lives. And he was my grandfather. A great, old man who walks the oaken hills every time I do. □

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF HUNTERS, BY SPECIES, 1990-99.

Year	Spring Turkey	Fall Turkey	Rabbit	Grouse	Squirrel	Pheasant ^a	Woodcock
1990	191,442	234,911	436,961	299,534	369,848	274,957	30,045
1991	179,202	252,210	405,004	292,418	348,868	254,051	24,681
1992	186,738	212,104	373,800	254,724	329,726	217,189	25,916
1993	201,060	222,780	347,129	242,398	311,103	198,657	23,452
1994	224,405	244,095	335,715	259,727	326,271	205,384	19,401
1995	239,521	261,395	297,570	239,014	293,852	182,224	15,702
1996	241,613	250,377	280,351	214,272	279,259	171,275	14,464
1997	233,287	249,934	261,115	197,994	267,051	148,900	13,374
1998	194,819 ^b	199,696 ^b	242,509	183,511	252,738	158,497	12,907
1999	237,984	244,638	221,179	174,576	238,887	142,142	12,212

Year	Quail ^a	Dove	Geese	Duck ^a	Hare	Woodchuck	Crow
1990	5,378	93,532	33,509	28,443	7,831	123,204	39,579
1991	3,279	86,377	36,032	29,247	7,601	118,257	39,014
1992	1,444	76,998	38,301	29,263	6,156	114,515	34,442
1993	2,657	73,462	41,577	35,782	5,801	109,576	34,648
1994	1,323	74,589	40,106	34,097	7,236	117,251	37,841
1995	1,451	67,754	28,715	30,274	5,949	113,127	36,782
1996	1,184	65,808	31,119	32,434	5,011	101,576	30,087
1997	1,009	60,178	30,574	32,180	3,723	104,561	30,696
1998	1,116	57,579	32,238	34,103	5,506	92,517	31,390
1999	1,550	49,551	33,734	31,503	4,379	90,853	29,131

^a Estimates don't include number of hunters on shooting preserves.

^b These low figures may have been caused by not including a Turkey Management Area map on the 1998-99 survey.

1999-00 Turkey, Small Game, and Furbearer Harvests

By Christopher S. Rosenberry

PGC Wildlife Biometrician

HOW MANY rabbits are harvested in Pennsylvania each year? How many muskrats are trapped? These are the types of questions that are often asked of wildlife biologists.

How does one go about attempting to answer important questions like these? First, one needs to realize that it is impos-

sible for the Game Commission to monitor the harvest of every hunter or trapper in Pennsylvania. Second, these questions can be answered by surveying a small group of hunters that is representative of all the hunters. From this sample of hunters, es-

continued on page 13



Dwight Adam

TABLE 2. HARVEST BY SPECIES, 1990-99.

Year	Spring Turkey	Fall Turkey	Rabbit	Grouse	Squirrel	Pheasant ^a	Woodcock
1990	17,472	25,527	1,672,360	353,647	2,044,264	302,276	50,918
1991	16,606	31,979	1,462,270	293,891	1,632,108	269,065	53,183
1992	18,180	21,468	1,488,850	254,539	1,761,285	261,541	51,246
1993	24,068	30,477	1,160,939	272,690	1,585,368	250,149	52,959
1994	28,558	39,094	1,025,319	304,162	1,826,618	236,698	29,654
1995	36,401	49,748	1,010,938	315,197	1,599,104	250,930	28,624
1996	33,726	35,787	807,072	218,256	1,442,560	215,502	26,846
1997	30,956	37,398	827,520	187,770	1,352,038	219,864	23,878
1998	32,661	33,628	911,003	183,468	1,331,051	216,669	31,602
1999	37,806	40,718	715,862	177,355	1,236,108	211,257	25,704

Year	Quail ^a	Dove	Geese	Duck ^a	Hare	Woodchuck	Crow
1990	7,879	1,022,402	72,901	98,026	3,615	1,299,647	355,492
1991	3,005	968,421	69,127	87,478	3,579	1,304,020	257,009
1992	1,236	734,707	78,883	93,687	3,961	1,157,090	185,192
1993	4,837	735,089	84,251	133,354	2,114	1,274,166	191,639
1994	2,902	669,459	102,979	128,164	3,352	1,284,819	247,219
1995	1,204	670,791	64,382	156,511	2,997	1,225,101	295,962
1996	3,387	603,114	96,910	151,142	1,582	1,149,995	275,541
1997	1,766	506,677	115,506	188,034	1,432	1,251,145	184,944
1998	241	562,348	131,831	146,050	2,507	1,204,582	247,047
1999	3,938	519,116	128,385	164,328	2,412	1,117,970	209,273

^aEstimates exclude harvest on shooting preserves.

TABLE 3. NUMBER OF HUNTERS AND TRAPPERS OF FURBEARERS, 1990-99.

Year	Raccoon	Muskrat	Red Fox	Gray Fox	Opossum	Skunk	Mink	Coyote ^a	Weasel
1990	9,676	4,147	7,941	6,542	3,653	1,914	2,560	7,782	508
1991	9,921	4,865	7,827	6,613	3,915	2,264	2,726	12,184	422
1992	9,525	4,419	7,019	6,263	3,793	2,208	2,539	13,643	452
1993	8,195	4,227	6,790	6,089	3,369	1,967	2,465	14,260	387
1994	7,066	5,570	8,319	7,515	4,267	3,071	3,212	20,597	784
1995	9,718	4,465	8,080	6,908	3,989	2,643	2,879	20,413	853
1996	12,951	6,478	10,007	8,361	6,140	3,443	3,703	21,937	942
1997	13,750	7,363	10,330	8,553	6,386	3,473	4,434	24,526	1,125
1998	12,794	5,900	9,982	8,594	5,558	2,948	3,512	30,016	733
1999 ^b	8,496	3,565	7,834	6,901	3,129	1,969	2,431	29,190	505

^a Combines estimates from Game Take Survey and Furtaker Survey.

^b Includes correction for junior and senior combination licenses.

TABLE 4. HARVEST OF FURBEARERS, 1990-99.

Year	Raccoon	Muskrat	Red Fox	Gray Fox	Opossum	Skunk	Mink	Coyote ^a	Weasel
1990	116,443	112,358	32,699	21,653	36,574	9,298	7,053	1,810	798
1991	130,608	156,014	28,495	30,409	37,177	8,907	10,355	3,719	481
1992	124,404	135,533	27,611	25,395	27,754	7,221	9,157	4,402	343
1993	118,964	121,657	25,862	23,839	25,807	7,920	7,808	6,161	526
1994	186,551	178,145	30,649	34,691	29,621	12,620	10,208	6,240	723
1995	120,462	130,442	31,110	23,518	29,688	9,995	8,602	6,662	687
1996	214,958	146,013	29,623	23,307	48,549	11,571	9,315	7,957	589
1997	194,696	216,066	36,923	26,043	60,717	12,344	14,063	6,685	1,172
1998	195,110	148,202	47,202	32,922	56,287	11,190	12,238	11,652	662
1999 ^b	107,407	94,215	36,860	26,794	33,723	6,723	13,774	9,586	319

^a Combines estimates from the Game Take and Furtaker surveys.

^b Includes correction for junior and senior combination licenses.

timates for all hunters can be calculated. For example, if a sample of 10 rabbit hunters out of a population of 100 rabbit hunters reported harvesting 30 rabbits (an average of 3 rabbits per hunter), then one could estimate that 100 hunters should harvest around 300 rabbits. This idea forms the basis for our "Game Take" and "Furtaker" surveys.

Each spring a sample of all hunters and trappers is randomly selected to receive a survey. Survey results are then used to estimate harvests and effort for all hunters and trappers. Although not perfect, this system does provide good indicators of trends in harvests and hunter and trapper effort.

Last spring, the Pennsylvania Game Commission randomly surveyed more than 23,000 of 1,031,315 hunters and trappers to estimate harvests and hunter effort for

turkeys, small game, and furbearers. Nearly two-thirds of all the hunters and trappers contacted returned a survey. Using information gathered from this survey, estimates of statewide harvests and hunter effort were calculated.

This year's results confirm trends that have been seen over the last decade or more. Number of hunters pursuing spring gobblers, ducks and coyotes has remained stable or increased, but fewer hunters and trappers are pursuing other species (Tables 1 and 3). With fewer hunters and trappers afield, it is not surprising that harvests of most species are also declining (Tables 2 and 4). Although there are fewer hunters and trappers afield when considered as a group, those that continue to hunt and trap are as successful (harvest per 100 hunter-days) or more successful than they were in years past (Table 5).

TABLE 5. HARVEST PER 100 HUNTER-DAYS, BY SPECIES, 1990-99.

Year	Spring Turkey	Fall Turkey	Rabbit	Grouse	Squirrel	Pheasant ^a	Woodcock
1990	2.0	2.9	57.6	20.0	87.2	23.5	38.0
1991	2.1	3.8	59.1	18.6	81.4	24.1	44.6
1992	2.3	3.1	67.3	19.1	97.1	29.0	52.5
1993	2.9	4.0	60.3	21.9	92.1	29.1	56.0
1994	2.8	4.6	48.7	21.1	85.2	25.2	40.1
1995	3.4	5.7	57.1	24.6	98.1	29.7	45.6
1996	3.1	4.1	49.2	19.3	92.0	29.4	52.1
1997	3.0	4.5	54.2	18.4	92.5	33.9	49.2
1998	3.7	4.9	60.0	18.5	93.5	27.9	57.1
1999	3.7	5.0	56.4	20.1	94.6	34.9	54.5

Year	Quail ^a	Dove	Geese	Duck ^a	Hare	Woodchuck	Crow
1990	32.2	215.1	42.5	69.3	23.1	105.8	159.0
1991	22.0	236.7	41.3	65.9	23.2	97.2	113.0
1992	38.3	223.3	41.9	69.1	34.0	97.1	108.8
1993	29.0	225.3	41.6	76.6	17.8	95.2	95.1
1994	65.1	196.5	47.5	78.3	22.0	99.3	117.8
1995	20.0	227.3	50.1	96.8	25.6	97.8	152.6
1996	66.9	214.9	55.3	89.5	17.1	92.3	147.5
1997	62.2	213.0	53.9	94.5	20.9	100.8	103.5
1998	3.6	215.1	66.9	77.4	21.2	88.6	110.8
1999	78.7	249.9	55.7	86.8	35.1	97.1	120.8

^a Estimates exclude effort on shooting preserves.



Becoming a Rifleman

By Jim Romanelli

IF MY MEMORY serves me right I was about eight years old when first allowed to handle a rifle. It was for only a couple of minutes when I was with my father and uncles, who were doing a little recreational shooting. Up to that day I had been allowed only to tag along and watch the fun from behind the firing line. During that episode, however, they could no longer resist my long face. They looked at me and whispered something, and then they nodded their heads.

The next thing I knew my dad was escorting me up to the firing line, and before I even got close to holding the rifle, we all went through the three lessons of basic firearm safety. Even though I can remember this like it was yesterday, the one thing that will always stand out in my memory was their adamancy — before and after I handled that rifle — for these rules. Those rules became second nature.

Those three rules were simple and so was the consequence if any of them were breached. The rules were: Always assume that every firearm is loaded; immediately point the firearm in a safe direction and be aware of what is around you so it remains pointed in a safe direction; and always open the action and look down into the chamber and magazine to make sure that it's empty and leave the action open. There was also a fourth unwritten rule that my father made very clear to me. And that was, if I was ever in a situation where there was a firearm around without an adult present, I was to immediately leave and find an adult.

If I broke any one of those rules, the

rifle was immediately taken away, and I was given a broomstick with one end painted red. Until I could prove that I could exercise those rules and responsibilities with that broomstick, exactly the same way, every time, for an undetermined period of time, I was not allowed to touch another firearm. It didn't take too many of those humble moments before proving I wasn't as dumb as I looked.

Once I got passed that initial stage, wanting to hit the target became my next objective. Just like a lot of youngsters, I was initially taught how to use open sights from a standing position. Because of my age, lack of experience and unsteady offhand position, my sight picture was never as steady as it should have been, and therefore my ability to be consistently accurate left a lot to be desired.

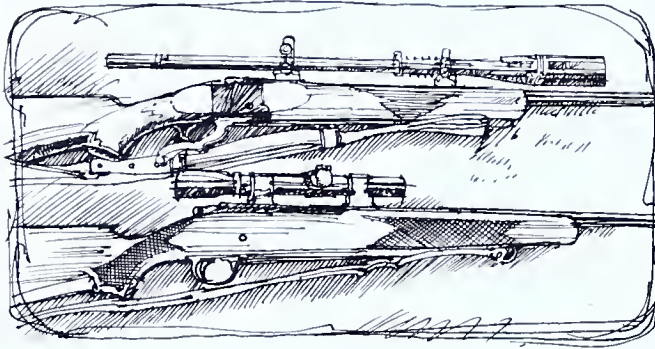
Not only that, those open factory sights weren't conducive to windage adjustment, and not much better for elevation, so I had to learn how to compensate by aiming to the left or right, above or below the target. Although I was happy to just be shooting a rifle, it took a while before I was able to consistently hit the tin cans beyond 30 yards.

Despite becoming what I thought to be a pretty good shot, it wasn't until I joined a rifle league in high school that those who really had the art honed to perfection educated me.

I can still remember my first big bore 200-yard match and looking

downrange at the targets with their 6-inch bulleyes and wondering if I could ever hit them. It sure was a lot different from making tin cans dance at 40 yards.

A few minutes later I noticed a couple of older gentlemen walk up to the firing line, and I thought I'd be able to beat those old-timers. During that hour, however, they performed with a focus and concentration that was undeterred. In looking at their score cards afterwards, I was truly humbled by their "possibles" (perfect scores) in all



four shooting positions. I don't mind admitting that in future matches I hung around those men as much as possible to learn their secrets. And in being true gentlemen, they were more than willing to dispense any information that I was willing to absorb.

I found out those secrets weren't really secrets at all, as good shooting consisted simply of practicing the discipline and concentration of four ingredients: position, sights, controlled breathing and trigger pull (that's a misnomer, it should be "trigger squeeze"). When those four factors were adhered to in that order, the end result was a bullseye, whether it was on paper or harvesting game (as long as there wasn't much of a crosswind).

Practice did not necessarily mean actual shooting. The majority of time those riflemen would practice at home

by putting a tiny target on a wall and dry firing at it a little every day, in all four positions, a week or so prior to a match. When the day came to compete, their skills were well honed. This practice helped them not only on the competition line, but also when hunting.

With all that said, it's my hope that this article will show how the disciplines of competitive riflery can be used to make the majority of us, who do not compete, better marksmen.

To begin with, everyone sees down a pair of rifle sights or through a scope differently, which means that no two people will place the bullet in exactly the same place from the same firearm (it may come close but never exactly the same). So the first item is to sight in your own rifle.

Shooting off a bench where the rifle is supported under the forearm and the butt stock so that human error is minimized initially does this. All we have to do is shoulder it, aim through the sights or scope and squeeze the trigger. The comfort of your position is important here, as you need to get behind the rifle and use the bench to support your body so the rifle doesn't move. As the rifle is in the crook of your shoulder and you look through the sights at the target, close your eyes for a few seconds and then reopen them. Your sight picture should not have changed. If it did, shift yourself or the rifle around so your sights stay on the target.

Controlled breathing is next. As you breathe your body moves, so, logically, the rifle and sights will also move. To minimize this error in getting that perfect sight picture, competitors are taught to take a couple of deep breaths, and on the last one, let out half the air, hold it, catch the sight picture and then squeeze the trigger. For me, if I hold that half breath more than five seconds the sights begin to waiver, and the longer I hold, the more exaggerated

that movement becomes. Five seconds doesn't sound like a long time, but to your body it is. With a little practice, you'll be taking half that time in getting your sights on the target.

Trigger squeeze (not pull) is next on the list. There are two veins of thought here. Some riflemen say that if you squeeze the trigger properly, you shouldn't know when the rifle goes off. Others say you should know exactly when it goes off. The second theory works best for me, because when I have the sight picture perfect, that's when I want to send the bullet downrange. The best way to feel the trigger is with the first digit of your index finger. It gives the best control because it's the most sensitive part of the finger. I've seen some novice shooters use the second digit, and invariably they tend to pull their shots to one side.

When you're comfortable and have the breathing and trigger pull down pat, try dry firing a couple of times at the target (here's when you'll find out whether you're flinching or not). If your sights stayed on the target while doing that, then try a couple of live rounds. If you succeeded in putting those shots within a few inches of each other, see where they've printed in relation to the bullseye. If you're real lucky and hit the bull, your sighting in is complete.

Most times, though, those shots won't come close enough to the bullseye, so then it's time to adjust the sights and put the group where you want it. Scopes and adjustable apertures are easy because they both have graduated adjustable knobs and are marked for windage and elevation. It's open sights that take a little guesswork.

Here's a simple rule of thumb: When adjusting the rear sight, move it in the direction you want to move the impact of the bullet. If you're shooting to the right of the target, then you'll want to move the bullet to the left, so therefore, move the rear sight to the left. If you're shooting low, elevate the rear sight the needed amount of clicks up. If you need to adjust the front sight the process is just the opposite.

Most of today's open sights have sliding adjustments, so a jeweler's screwdriver can be used. But many of the older rifles need to be drifted by careful use of a punch and hammer. I can hear some of you say, "How can I tell how far to adjust the old sights?" It doesn't take much movement of a sight to change the path of the bullet, so the best way to tell is by putting a piece of masking tape on the part of the sight that is dovetailed into the barrel, and also a piece of tape on the barrel just in front of the sight then draw a straight line across the two. As you move the rear sight with the punch and hammer you'll see that line turn into two lines as the two pieces of tape move away from each other. After you see a change in the line, take a shot or two, then see where the bullets strike on the target. If necessary, make another adjustment.

As far as elevation goes, most rear sights have a little piece of stamped steel that's stepped and is located under the rear sight that will raise or lower the sight when pushed in or out. It's not exact enough for target work, but it's certainly close enough for practical hunting ranges out to 100 yards.

When sighting in a rifle I usually start at 25 yards, because this will show a hit on the target that might be a complete miss at 100 yards. Once the sights are adjusted dead center at 25 yards, then move out to 100 yards.

Before we get into the different shooting positions, I'd like to mention that they all have one thing in common: The rifle should be held as parallel to the chest as possible. This is done for three reasons: First, it is a more natural position that makes it more comfortable. Second, it gives the rifle greater support and, third, you feel less recoil.

The most steady position is prone (lying down). It allows the least

amount of stress to the supporting muscles because the ground supports your whole body. The legs are important here because they are used as anchors. They can either be spread apart, or the leg on the off side is bent so that the foot is up against the knee of the other leg. Either way prevents you from rocking, and therefore, allows you to maintain a steady position for accuracy.

Your arms act as pillars that support your body as well as the rifle. The arm that supports the forearm should be perpendicular to the rifle. If it's off to one side, you'll be stressing your muscles in trying to hold the rifle up as well as trying to keep it steady (this also helps you in keeping the rifle parallel to your chest).

I've often used the prone position when hunting groundhogs just after the alfalfa and timothy fields had been harvested, and also a couple of times while deer hunting in the thick mountain laurel. Many times all I could see were the legs of deer, so a prone position allowed me to see enough of the deer to determine gender as well as having a clear shot at the chest.

The sitting position is the second steadiest position and by far the most widely used. There are two styles of sitting. The crossed-legged style works well if you're long-legged and short-bodied. For some folks this puts too much strain on the lower back, so they turn to a more upright style with their feet apart, heels dug into the ground (if possible) and elbows situated on the inside of the knees. The thighs help support the weight of the upper body as well as the rifle. I've had several people ask me, "How do I know how far out and apart my feet should be?" My answer is that your back will tell you by what you find comfortable. Too much strain on your back is never conducive to accuracy, so find what's com-

fortable. And as always, keep an eye on whether you're canting the rifle.



Kneeling is the third position and very quick to assume if need be. The knee on the same side as the trigger hand will be on the ground supporting your weight while you allow your backend to rest on the heel of that foot. The other knee supports the elbow that holds the forearm of the rifle. The elbow of the trigger hand will be straight from your body to control canting of the sights.

The last position is shooting offhand (standing), which is the least steady of the four. You should be standing 90 degrees to the target so that the rifle is across your chest as you look down the sights. Your feet should be a little more than hip width apart, the elbow of the arm that holds the forearm should be pointing straight down (as with all the other positions) for support, with the elbow of the trigger arm pointing straight out from your body to prevent canting. Now add your sight picture, breathing and trigger squeeze.

I know a few people who claim they shoot best when standing, but when we get to a range, it doesn't pan out that way. Remember, the less support there is for your body and rifle, the less accurate you're going to be.

In my hunter education classes, I usually teach that when taking a shot from the offhand position, it's best to improvise with some form of support such as a tree trunk or branch, walking stick, or even the rifle sling. Any aid is a lot better than nothing. But if nothing is all you have, then you'll have to rely on your practice in the offhand position.

As a competitor and a hunter there are two things that I can promise. The first is that these positions will rarely be perfectly adhered to, and you'll most likely improvise due to conditions outside your control. The second is that the more you practice at home or at the range, the more your marksmanship improves. Then you'll be on your way to becoming a true rifleman. □

BEAR FACTS	
MALE	FEMALE
	
LGE	LGE
SM	SM

Bear Check Stations

A wealth of information

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

FOR THOUSANDS of hunters, no bear season would be complete without a stop at the nearest check station. "How many have come through? What was the biggest? Any record breakers? Where was that one shot?" The

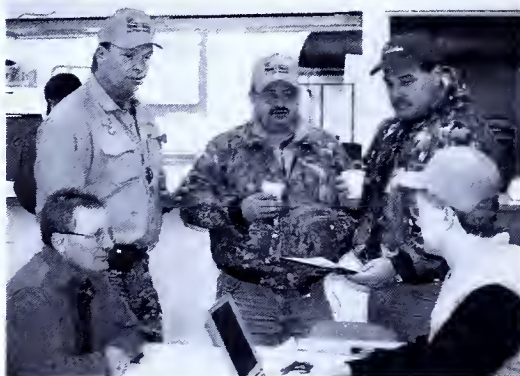
questions are echoed over and over, long into the evening. It seems like a reassurance to some. Though they might not have gotten one, somebody did.

In fact, lots of hunters did, as this year's harvest of 3,075 bears set a new record. Clinton County, where most of these photographs were taken, led the state with 248. Weather played a large role in the record harvest. It was cool enough to keep hunters moving, and the light snow cover made seeing and tracking easier. An



abundance of food also kept the bears moving about.

In his first season as our new bear biologist, Mark Ternent (above left, talking with a hunter) was on-hand at the Renovo check station. Also new this year was a computer system used to gather information. The new system came with many benefits, including a capture history for previously tagged bears. More important, at the close of each day, the computers allowed the statewide harvests to be easily tallied. Station workers praised the convenience and speed of the system. Reporters were also pleased with the easy access to information. Since they were established in 1979, check stations have become an integral part of Pennsylvania's bear management program. Although they have become a tradition to many hunters, their purpose is to collect biological data used in management decisions. Because bears prefer densely forested areas and tend to be secretive animals, determining how many live in an area is difficult. Thus, sportsmen who bring their bears to a check station are helping with the management of one of Pennsylvania's premier big game species.



HERE, PGC wildlife biologist Dan Brauning interviews a happy hunter while several others look on at the Antes Fort check station.



THESE TWO JUNIOR HUNTERS had a successful first day. Alan McGregor, (left) a 12-year-old from Renovo, took this bruin, during his first hunt, less than a mile from the check station. With an estimated live weight of 523, it was the largest bear to come through the Renovo check station on the first day. Jesse Rigel (right) of Hyner went home with this 136-pound bear that he took in Grugan Township, Clinton County.

TWENTY-FIVE CHECK STATIONS across the state allow biologists to gather valuable information about bears. Hunter interviews provide biologists with an understanding of the density and expansion of the bear population. How many bears there are, where the population is headed, and health and body conditions of the bears are other things determined from information gathered at check stations. One of the first things check station workers do is weigh the bears, which can indicate the health of the animals.



AT MANY CHECK STATIONS, such as the Renovo and Antes Fort stations shown here, a digital scale is used. The bear's feet are slipped through ropes attached to a hydraulic lift, which lifts the bear up to be weighed.

If a bear has been field-dressed, the live weight can be estimated by adding 18 percent to the dressed weight. In 2000, the average field-dressed weight of checked bears was 147 pounds — 166 for males and 129 for females. Several bears, however, were well above the average. The top 10 bears for the year were all more than 570 pounds, and the top five were all more than 610. This year, the largest bear checked weighed 540 pounds field-dressed. Alive, it would have weighed about 637 pounds.



TO DETERMINE an adult bear's age, scientists examine a tooth. Check station workers pull a tiny tooth behind the canine and send it to a lab. Scientists there soak the tooth in vinegar, making it soft. A thin slice is then shaved off, dyed, and placed under a microscope where age rings are counted — just like a tree! About 10 months after bear season, the lab will send the age results to the Game Commission, which in turn notifies every hunter of his bear's age.



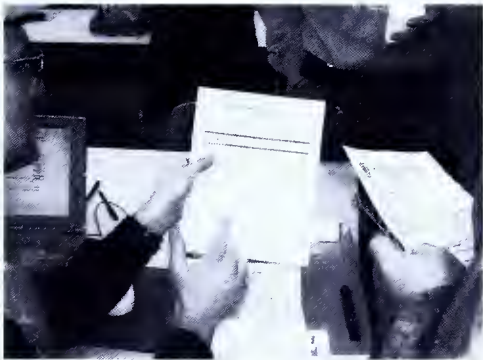
BEARS as old as 20 have been documented, but the average age is 2.3 years. Age data helps identify problems in particular age groups.

ONCE A BEAR has gone through a check station, it is tagged. This tag lets other Game Commission officials know that the bear has been checked at a check station. Here Frank Hoover affixes the tag, which must remain with the bear until it is taken to a taxidermist or processed.



A TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP of the region is used to pinpoint where each bear brought in was killed. This information is used to compare harvest rates from different regions of the state and within counties from one year to the next.

SOME OF THE BEARS that come through the check station were trapped and tagged while still alive, as nuisance bears, for example. Below, PGC bear biologist Mark Ternent checks a bear's ear for one of those tags.



WHEN A BEAR is brought in that had been trapped and tagged, the hunter is curious about things such as the bear's age and where it had been captured. The new computer system allowed the hunter to receive this information immediately.

Strangers in the Night

By William Wasserman

Wyoming County WCO

IT WAS Labor Day, about 10:30 p.m. when the phone rang. Trouble, I thought. This time it's going to be trouble. Reports of night shooting had been on the increase the last few weeks and I knew my holiday was over. Someone in a pickup truck had been firing shots. The caller was certain they were poachers.

I donned my uniform and was heading west along Route 6 within minutes. Pennsylvania was in the death throes of a severe drought and the warm, starry air promised to keep it that way as I cruised the dusty back roads scanning for a vehicle or the tell-tale sweep of a spotlight. But there was nothing. The land had settled in for the night. Everything was still save the fleeting swoop of a bat disappearing in the moon shadow. The notion of recent gunfire suddenly seemed absurd. It would have been so out of place in the dreamy, sprawling landscape. I turned on an obscure back road and traveled several more miles. Not a sign of life anywhere. Just as I was thinking that nothing would come of the complaint, I passed a pickup truck backed into the tree line. There were two men inside.

I stopped my Bronco and backed up. Approaching the men head on was dangerous but I had no choice. Worse, my returning vehicle had created a dust cloud so large it engulfed us all in a thick, talc-like haze. Impossible to

see, I was forced to wait several minutes before moving in.

Both men were drinking and appeared intoxicated. The driver perhaps less so than his passenger. I secured identification, then radioed dispatch with their names and my location. After inspecting the truck and discovering no illegal game or firearms, I asked if they intended driving tonight. Chester, the vehicle's owner, pointed across the road to Ray's house. He planned to stay there tonight.

Satisfied they weren't poachers I left for home, but within minutes dispatch called about warrants on Ray, stating that the constable wanted me to hold him until she could meet me. I turned back and as I drew near Ray's house, I saw Chester driving his truck toward me.

"Where's Ray?" I said, flagging him down.

Chester stared at me numbly for a moment, then glanced over his shoulder. "Just dropped him off at the house."

"I thought you were supposed to stay there tonight," I said.

Chester's face took on the appearance of someone caught stealing from the church basket. "I . . . ah, I was going to but . . ."

"But he changed his mind," a voice cut thickly from behind. It was Ray. Standing at the back of my vehicle, he began walking toward me. I quickly stepped out and ordered Ray to halt, then escorted both men into my headlights.

"Know why I'm back?" I asked Ray.

This is one of 52 accounts recently published in a new book, *The Best of 'It's a Wild Life'* by WCO Bill Wasserman. Many *Game News* readers no doubt remember the "Looking Back" column Bill wrote for *Game News* in 1993, about his experiences as a WCO in Montgomery and Wyoming counties. A prolific writer, Bill has also been writing a column, "It's a Wild Life" for his local newspaper, The New Age-Examiner.

Featured here are 52 of some of Bill's best columns. Complementing Bill's accounts are stunning full color photographs by John Wasserman (Bill's twin brother and fellow WCO) and Ray Massacesi.

The Best of 'It's a Wild Life' can be ordered from The New Age-Examiner, P.O. Box 59, Tunkhannock, PA 18657 (570/836-2123). Visa and MasterCard accepted. The price is \$26.50, including state sales tax; add \$2.75 for shipping.

"Yeah," he shrugged. "I got warrants on me. I ain't gonna give you no trouble, though; I know I done wrong."

I patted him down and cuffed him. Then, after administering sobriety tests on Chester, which he failed, I radioed dispatch informing them I had Ray in custody and asked if any state troopers were in the vicinity for a DUI. Within minutes, a car was in route.

The three of us stood along the dark road waiting. The troopers were miles away and Ray was eyeing me in a peculiar way, as if I were some bizarre and grotesque zoo animal that had crawled from its den. Finally, in dull tones he spoke.

"Why are you here, man? Can you just tell me that? I mean . . . Chester and me, we're minding our own business in the middle of nowhere . . . and then you come along!"

"I got a report about poaching," I said.

"Poaching," said Ray. "Imagine that, Chester. He's here because of poaching!"

"Imagine that," Chester mimicked teetering on the balls of his feet. "They been poaching around here for years."

Ray stared at me with eyes like saucers. "Poachers . . . what a joke," he snickered drunkenly. "I'll tell you what I always say: buck or doe . . . down they go."

"Then I hope you have five hundred dollars for the fine when you're caught," I countered.

"Five hundred! Is that right! Whew! A deer ain't worth \$500."

Both men stood in dumb silence. Then Chester, still reeling from the fact that he'd been busted, proclaimed, "Imagine that, Ray. You're being arrested for warrants and I'm being arrested for drinking because some @#\$%* idiot called about a stupid poacher!"

"Imagine that, Chester," concurred Ray.

The more he thought about it, the more upset Chester became with his predicament. "Well, thanks a lot for ruining my life," he growled. "I drive for a living. If I lose my license, I lose my job. So . . . thanks a lot for ruining my life."

His comment was nothing new. I'd heard it before, many times. "Chester, you were responsible for your own actions tonight," I said.

"Well, all I know is . . . thanks a lot for ruining my life," Chester repeated. Echoing it over and over until, finally exhausting himself, he plunked down on the grass and went to sleep.

As it turned out, the state police and constables met me, and Chester and Ray were taken away. Turns out Chester had priors for driving under the influence, and Ray's warrants were for dodging court on DUI charges.

I finally did get home that night, but I never found any poachers. I'll keep looking, though. And I'll eventually get my poacher, because just like Chester and Ray, some folks never learn. □

Penn's Woods Sketchbook
**BIG MOON
RISING**
by Bob Sopchick

THE MIDWIFE WRAPPED the large baby in the biggest blanket she had in her satchel, then laid him on a pillow in a peach crate while his exhausted mother rested.

"Twelve pounds if he's an ounce," said the midwife. "He's hardly cried either, a good boy, like his daddy who I delivered in this same house. I thought my midwif-

ing days were long past, but who knew we'd have an ice storm like this?

"No getting to the hospital with trees and wires down on the road. Husband and doctor stuck in town. No electric. Baby won't wait, though. 'Ready or not, here I come,' he says. Somehow, I just knew tonight would be the night."

The midwife studied the newborn's soft face in the lantern light, then glanced down at the label on the side of the crate, a painting of a smiling moon rising above the words Blue Moon Peaches. The midwife cooed, "Why you look just like a big round happy moon, sailing through the sky, sailing through life."

So that is how, on that icy February night, that Moon got his nickname and had the course of his life described so succinctly.

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS LATER, Moon looks not much different than that moon on the label, or the plump babe born that night, only 420 pounds larger on a hulking 6-5 frame. His round face is smooth as a peach, with wide-spaced eyes that twinkle above a constant smile. Shy and polite, Moon has an adolescent voice that always cracks in mid-sentence.

Moon lives alone in the same house he was born in, an odd little blue house tucked up in a steep, brushy hollow. The house has a few small rooms, but big enough for Moon and his pint-sized terrier, Pip. His land is bordered by a vast farm on the east, and on the west by woods.

The only place Moon has ever worked is the pallet factory over the hill, and in season he hunts to and from work; three miles up through the hollow, across the top of the hill and down through the farms.

Moon's small world is comprised of small things. He sips wild teas from a delicate porcelain cup. His subcompact car, that he hardly ever drives, is a dilapidated Chevette that lists noticeably to the driver's side. Moon's shotgun is a petite single-shot 20-gauge.

Moon loves to cook, especially game, and the back of the kitchen door is shingled from top to bottom with recipes. His pride and joy, and the only really big thing he owns, is an enormous antique Merrimac cookstove that takes up one-fourth of the kitchen.

MOON OPENS the cookstove door and peers into the cavernous oven at two rabbit potpies bubbling up through holes in the crust. He removes the pies, wraps them in foil, and packs them in a basket along with a thermos of hazelnut coffee and a jar of honey from his own backyard hives. He covers a honey applesauce cake with a towel and fills



a paper bag with warm biscuits.

"Let's go, Pip. Let's go down to Stutzman's farm."

Moon shifts the car into neutral, coasts down the long lane and drifts into the farmyard. Ed and Jenny Stutzman are an elderly couple who own the farm, and once a month Moon prepares a game dinner and dines with them.

Farmer Ed samples the potpie, and raises an eyebrow. "Yeah, this is one of my rabbits. Not a wiry old woods rabbit fed on greenbriar. I only grow the best eatin' rabbits. I said this before, Moon, but you're the best hunter and game cook in this county."

"I shot my first rabbit on this farm 26 years ago," says Moon. "Your rabbits are bigger and faster than those on the other side of the hill. How 'bout it, Pip?"

Moon notices that Ed has grown more gaunt since last month's dinner.

Jenny's words are few and strained. "So how is your season going, Moon?"

"Real good. Broke up a flock of turkeys on my way to work, and called a nice jake in on my way home. Got three ringnecks on your farm so far. Lots of rabbits and squirrels, too. Next time I'll make a big pot of pheasant and venison sausage with sesame sauerkraut. I found a new recipe."

Jenny glances at Ed who looks away and studies the wall with rheumy eyes.

"We won't be dining together next month, Moon. Ed and I are moving to the city, near our daughter. With Ed ailing, and us getting on, we just can't stay. We sold the farm."

Moon's cheeks flush as he runs a hand over his bald head. "I understand. You gotta do what you gotta do."

After dinner Moon pushes the car back up the hill with Pip in the driver's seat. It had run out of gas the week before. As he pushes, Moon frets over how much he will miss his neighbors. It was almost like losing his parents all over again.

Moon and Pip hunt the farm hard all the next day, gleaning each hedgerow in the slow, careful way they would pick every morsel from a rack of deer ribs. He knew every detail and feature of its gentle topography; where the best cover was for rabbits, where grouse hid in the pines, the best stands for doves and deer. Sometimes when he sat by the stove on a winter's night with Pip in his lap, he would hunt the farm in his mind while Pip routed rabbits in his sleep. He hoped that whoever bought the farm would care about it as much as he did.

IN EARLY JANUARY Moon sees several red pickups parked in the Stutzman barnyard. The trucks all have the same logo, "Patton Construction, Inc." on the doors. Later that morning Moon goes down to meet the new owner.

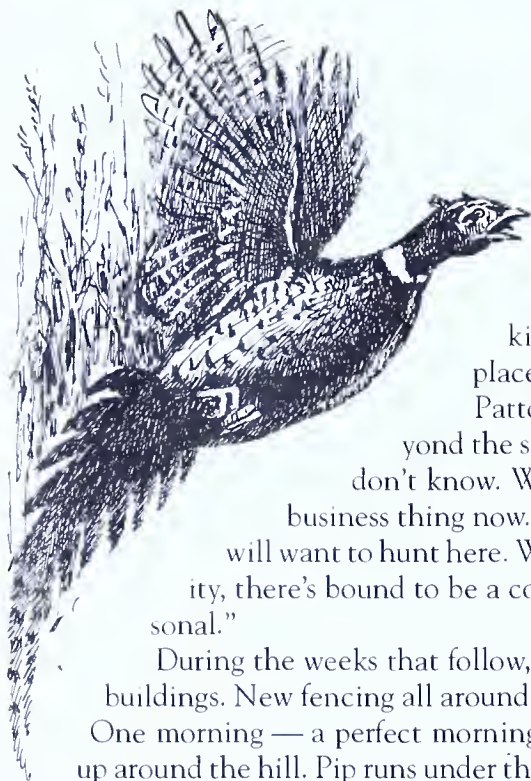
"Hi, neighbor," says Moon. "I live next door, right up that hollow. I know you're busy, but just stopped down to say hello. Brought you a box of turkey salad sandwiches."

"Thanks," says the contractor, extending his hand. "Gene Patton."

"Looks like you're ready to do some building. A housing development, maybe?"

"No, no. The farm is going to stay just as it is. I'm going to use it as a business retreat. It's always nice to get out of the city. We're going to build a conference area and a suite





of offices in the house and spruce up the buildings. I'll lease the land for farming and plant for wildlife. It'll be a good place to bring clients to hunt, but that's about it."

Moon is beside himself with joy. "By the way, I was wondering if I could continue to hunt here. I've hunted this farm since I was a kid. And your guests are welcome to hunt on my place anytime."

Patton looks past his squeaky-voiced neighbor, beyond the strange blue house, up into the brushy hollow. "I don't know. We have plenty of space here. This is more of a business thing now. If I give you permission, then everyone around will want to hunt here. With my clients in the field, and corporate liability, there's bound to be a conflict. I hope you understand, it's nothing personal."

During the weeks that follow, a forlorn Moon watches the crew work on the buildings. New fencing all around, No Trespassing signs tacked up every 10 yards. One morning — a perfect morning for rabbit hunting — Moon follows the signs up around the hill. Pip runs under the fence and up the gully where they always cross into the farm, but Moon calls him back and holds the terrier under his arm. They look out over the fields. Pip's nose twitches. Moon's lip trembles.

A DRIZZLY MARCH MORNING, and Gene Patton sets out to build several treestands. He shifts his pickup into 4WD and drives up a steep, slippery lane that winds far into a distant woodlot. Patton notices a worn deer trail that leads from his land into Moon's hollow, and at the border builds a solid, triangular stand by connecting three trees.

After plotting several shooting lanes, Patton decides to cut down a big, snapped-off poplar nearby. He revs up a chain saw and comes in from one side of the poplar, when, almost through the other, the chain breaks. He decides to return after lunch with some of his crew to finish the job. While putting on his jacket under the stand, Patton hears a cracking sound, tries to leap out of the path of the falling tree, but trips. The poplar smashes down through the treestand, crushing him.

When their boss doesn't show for lunch or answer his phone, a foreman and two crewmen drive out on quads to find him. After much searching they spot his pickup in the dense thicket. "He's still breathing," says the foreman. "Bill, get me the first-aid kit from my quad. Kenny, run down to the farm and bring another saw and the tool truck with the winch. Load up some lumber and big spikes. Get the tractor and some more men up here fast! I'll call 911 from here, but have Jim call again from the farm to confirm it. Tell him to wait there for the ambulance."

Patton grows paler by the minute. There is much blood among the splinters. The men work frantically while waiting for help. The tree is too near the ground to get a jack under, and they are unable to dig beneath him because of a network of roots.



While administering first aid, the men turn when they hear the twang of a fence wire and look up at a monstrous, canvas-clad figure with a little white dog under his arm.

"Looks like we got a situation here," squeaks Moon. "A bad one, too." Moon takes off his hat and canvas jacket and rolls up his shirtsleeves. He blows into his cupped hands and rubs them together, then inhales huge volumes of air through wide-flared nostrils as he paces back and forth, snapping his suspenders, talking to himself.

"Step aside," Moon says evenly.

Moon busts off a stub from a branch, bites down on it, and straddles Patton's head. He squats, and grabs two broken limbs like handles. A deep crimson blooms in Moon's face as his lips draw back in a feral snarl revealing tiny teeth biting deep into the stub. A strangled roar, more animal than human, rises from his barrel chest. Moon's massive legs strain, legs made strong from years of hard factory work, immense muscles that so nimbly carry his bulk six miles a day through fields and over hills. Moon stares straight ahead, dark eyes riveted on some distant spot in the fields or some other place far within himself. He shudders and rises, legs locked like steel piers.

A YEAR PASSES. Moon stirs a pot as a red pickup pulls up. Slowly and painfully, Gene Patton gets out of the truck and struggles up the steps to Moon's door. He knocks with a crutch.

"Hi, neighbor," says Patton.

"Welcome, Mr. Patton. Come on in. Make yourself at home," says Moon.

"I sent you a letter, but wanted to come here to thank you in person. I'll be in physical therapy for a long time yet, and it's been tough. Both legs crushed, hips broke, some ribs, collarbone, a collapsed lung, a severe concussion. Lots of pins in these bones. Five operations and they're not done yet. Anyway, I'm alive thanks to you. And I . . . and . . . and my gosh, Moon, what is that you're cooking? Smells wonderful. I heard you were quite the chef."

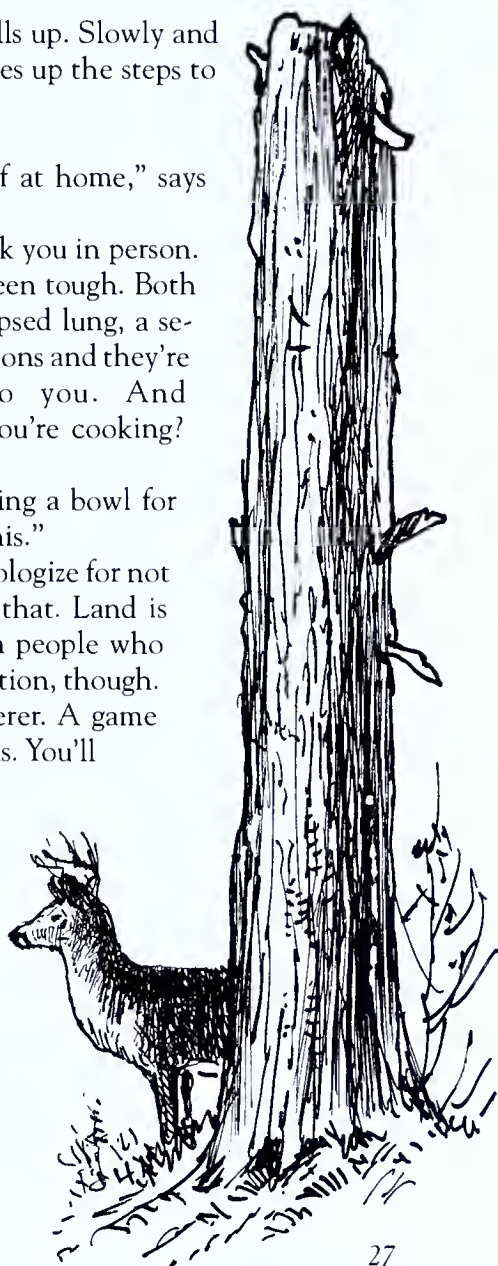
"It's venison and wild turkey chili," says Moon, ladling a bowl for Patton and one for himself. "Good on a cold day like this."

"Mmm. Delicious," says Patton. "Listen, I want to apologize for not letting you hunt on the farm. I want to apologize for that. Land is more than a commodity, and neighbors are more than people who live nearby. You're welcome to hunt anytime. One exception, though. On days when I have guests I'd like you to be our caterer. A game dinner, once a month. A big spread, and I mean the works. You'll be paid well, too."

"Why, I'd like that very much," says Moon. The color rose in his great face as he scanned the recipe door. "Well, in September we could have sherried doves and in October a Keystone Burgoo if you got lots of folks, and wild turkeys with running gear gravy in November. Oh my, I better get a menu together soon."

"It's your show, Moon. Now, how about some more of that chili? The docs say I have to get some meat back on these bones."

"That's one thing I know all about," says Moon.





Hunting is Relevant, Right and Moral

By Ben Moyer

HUNTING has taken many forms over its long history. It has served mankind as a form of subsistence, as a ritual rite of passage in countless cultures, even as a form of spiritualism. Today, hunting provides approximately one million Pennsylvanians with high quality outdoor recreation; a unique avenue for shared experience among family and friends; nutritious and wholesome food; and a way to interact intimately with the natural world.

These values are as important today as they have ever been in the millions of years that humans have been hunters. The fact that society provides

a system for buying food through a cash economy does not negate the personal satisfaction of obtaining some food — even a token amount — directly from the native environment. Many authors, including some who condemn hunting on the grounds of “animal rights,” have lamented the increasing isolation of mankind from nature in our rapidly urbanizing and technologically dominated culture. Hunting remains one of the few ways for people to interface directly with the natural environment, and in so doing obtain for themselves values that are both tangible and emotional, without the need for cash transactions or the meddling of a “middle man.” Hunting continues to be relevant today be-

cause it's an avenue for original personal experience — and participation — in nature, at a time when much of what we perceive about the world around us comes across a TV or computer screen.

Hunting is not a sport in our traditional understanding of the word "sport." True sports are competitive and played in settings artificially altered by others. Golf, tennis, football and bowling are true sports. Competition is, or should be, irrelevant in hunting, and hunting takes place in those remnants of natural landscapes where we can still see how the world works without our heavy hand upon it. The environmental perspective that hunting provides will be critically important to society in this new century, as we grope for justifications to curb unplanned urban sprawl and explosive growth for growth's sake.

Modern hunters call hunting a sport only because we who write about it, and those who administer and regulate it, have not provided them with a meaningful alternative term. The term "sport hunting" arose as a way to distinguish regulated rec-

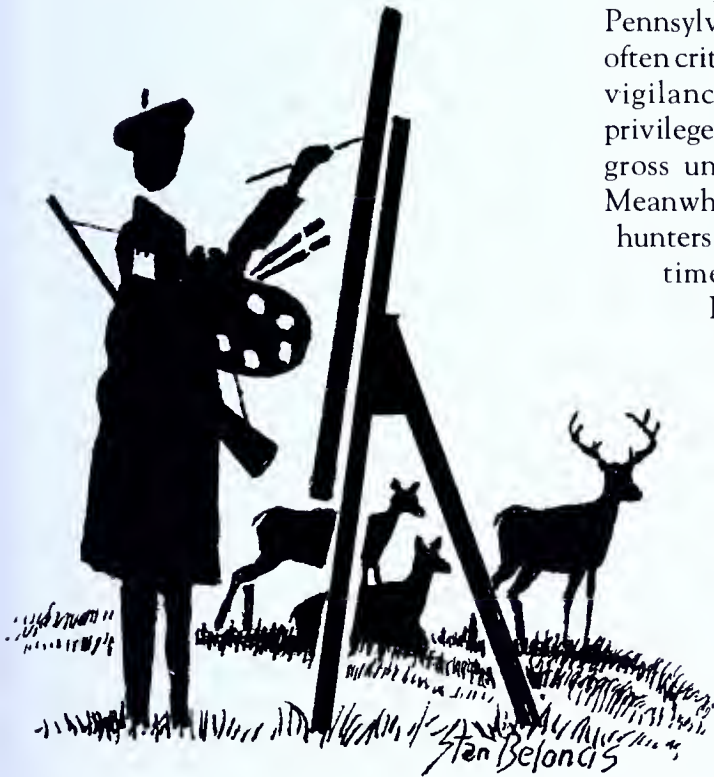
reational hunting from the commercial market gunning that decimated wildlife across North America more than a century ago. That business was not hunting, it was slaughter, and the regulated, scientifically monitored hunting of today bears no resemblance to it. A growing number of hunters appropriately refer to the subject not as "sport hunting," but as "recreational hunting," recognizing that hunting's rewards are fundamentally different than those derived from competitive sport.

It's true that the general public's view of hunting is not entirely positive. But the assembly of people who carry a hunting license is no different from the assemblies who drive cars, consume alcohol, enter into marriages, or handle public money. Some individuals invariably choose to abuse the privilege, and when they do, their actions reflect poorly on the entire group.

Last year, from among a population of nearly one million hunters, the Pennsylvania Game Commission — often criticized for its law enforcement vigilance — revoked the hunting privileges of about 200 violators for gross unlawful or unsafe conduct. Meanwhile, more than 3,000 other

hunters continue to volunteer their time and energy as volunteer Hunter-Trapper Ed instructors. Their efforts helped in cutting the hunting incident rate in Pennsylvania by 600 percent in 30 years, and there is no way to gauge their positive influence on the ethics and attitudes of today's hunters in the field.

Hunting's simplest and most immediate value may be in what it



offers to modern families. Hunting provides an ideal setting for close association and camaraderie among families and across generations. Each year grandparents hunt with grandchildren, parents hunt with sons and daughters, brothers hunt with brothers, and husbands hunt with wives. Doing so they share meaningful experience and memories. There may be no other institution, other than the established holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas, that brings so many families together in such an intimate way.

For me, the claim that hunting is cruel or barbaric is difficult to reconcile with personal experience. I know hundreds of hunters, maybe thousands. The most avid ones among them — whom some critics, by definition, would accuse of being the most cruel — work hard to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for conservation projects that help a variety of wildlife, not just those species they hunt. I know hunters who take their vacation time to help kids learn to behave responsibly in the outdoors. And last year Pennsylvania hunters donated 85,000 pounds of nutritious venison to food banks across the state, providing 200,000 needed meals where hunger persists in an affluent nation. Instead of cruelty and barbarism among hunting's ranks, I see commitment and personal responsibility.

Interestingly, some of our most talented wildlife artists are hunters. These men and women display a highly refined sensitivity toward wildlife, yet they hunt. Viewing their work, it's hard to imagine that their hunting is motivated by cruelty. Some of the most beautiful and compelling works of art in mankind's ancient history were produced by hunters, moved to artistic expression by their awe for the grace and mystery of their prey.

Ben Moyer writes about hunting, fishing, wildlife and conservation in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and *Pennsylvania Sportsman* magazine. He also is a past president of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association. This article originally appeared in the Scranton Times Tribune.

Proudly, Pennsylvania is home to many talented artist/hunters who are carrying that tradition into the future. Most will tell you it was hunting that sparked their initial interest in celebrating the wild.

Hunting benefits not only individuals and families, but society as well. Abundant deer herds grazing on crops cost Pennsylvania farmers \$75 million annually, and the state's commercial forest products industry shoulders a similar annual loss due to deer browsing on young seedlings. Ecologists believe that high deer populations have changed the face of Pennsylvania's forests over the past century, and can document the disappearance of native plant species from some areas due to heavy browsing. Around 50,000 deer/vehicle collisions occur each year on Pennsylvania highways, at significant risk to human life, and the adaptable whitetail has proven difficult to control in expanding suburban developments. Regulated hunting remains the only practical way for society to manage deer numbers, and similar problems are surfacing with burgeoning flocks of snow and Canada geese.

In maintaining relative stability in wildlife populations, hunting offers services to society that would be prohibitively expensive if assigned directly to government programs. Simultaneously, it's a source of personal value and deep satisfaction that may be unavailable to individuals and families from any other venue. Hunting is one of those rare "win-win" situations we hear about but rarely see. Except for the actions of an embarrassing minority, its history is long, honorable and deeply moral. Its loss would leave Pennsylvania a far poorer place. □



FIELD NOTES



Paul Bunyans?

In the more than 90 years of combined service, PGC foresters Bill Amick, Harry Johnson and Harry Rowles have been treed by bears, struck by trees and lightning, encountered countless rattlesnakes, have been stung or bitten by bees, wasps and ticks, and all without complaint. In the line of duty they've each walked more than 45,000 miles through mountainous terrain and have tallied more than 40,000 acres of timber sales, which has improved wildlife habitat and brought in \$26 million to the Game Fund, and much of that revenue has been used to purchase more game lands.

— ASST. REGIONAL FORESTER BRYCE L. HALL, RIDGWAY

Skyjacked

WYOMING — Ed Zygunt was boating along the north branch of the Susquehanna River when he noticed an osprey dive into the water and lift off with a bass in its talons. Suddenly a bald eagle skimmed over the osprey, causing it to drop its prey into the river. The eagle plummeted then arose with its booty and landed ashore to eat it.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Dedicated

BUTLER — I was interviewing a man for a disabled person's permit who had the following medical problems: a recent heart transplant, a lung removed, degenerative arthritis in both ankles, and is currently on kidney dialysis awaiting a transplant. I asked him why he didn't apply for a permit much sooner and he responded, "Hey, I'm doing good. When I was in the hospital I saw people who were really sick. I can at least walk 20 or so feet, and my son takes me hunting." Jim, you're a true sportsman and genuine inspiration for all of us.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, FRANKLIN

Eventful

MERCER — To escape football mania on Thanksgiving afternoon, retired PGC Environmental Specialist (and former Mercer County WCO) Barry Ray and I decided to take a short ride. We expected to see some deer and maybe a flock of turkeys, but we were surprised to see five pairs of barn owls and a northern harrier working some hayfields at 3 p.m. If that wasn't enough, we noticed a short-eared owl sitting along the same road.

— DEPUTY TERRY MCCLELLAND, GROVE CITY

It's Only Me

Bear Lake residents Mr. And Mrs. Chase are always extremely helpful with reporting nuisance wildlife, particularly bears. One night I stopped by to get some information and accidentally stepped on some outside Christmas lights. Mrs. Chase heard the popping sounds, and I had to reassure her (and then apologize for breaking the lights) that it wasn't a bear prowling around outside.

— WES JOSEPH G. WENZEL, NORTHEAST REGION, DALLAS

Planned it That Way

FRANKLIN — I was manning our display at the Mercersburg Fair when I noticed a rabbit hopping around through the crowd. It stopped a few feet from the taxidermy mounts we had in our display and sat for a few minutes. When it finally moved off, a man said to me, "You people sure do put together some real-life displays."

— WCO KEVIN L. MOUNTZ, ST. THOMAS

Part of the Equation

ADAMS — 2000 was quite quite a year for deer hunters here. Not only was there a large population last fall, but I cannot recall a year when the deer were bigger or had nicer racks. Abundant food from last spring right on through the season was one reason why the deer were so nice. Age and genetics also play a part in big racks, but nice antlers even on young deer has convinced me that a good food supply is extremely important.

— WCO LARRY D. HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

It Figures

BRADFORD — On the first day of bear season I received a call to take care of a bear that had been hit by a vehicle driven by bear hunters returning home from their hunt.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Thanks, Ikes

YORK — We're fortunate to have a rifle range on our leased lands at Indian Rock Dam near New Salem, and most sportsmen use the range responsibly. However, a few individuals have been destroying the place, ruining it for everyone. I must report, however, that sportsmen from the York County Chapter 67 Izaak Walton League have pitched in and helped our Food and Cover crew rebuild the damaged range. My thanks and hats off to David L. Smith of Seven Valleys, Mike Melhorn of York, William Yeager of York and Jim Holder of Abbotstown.

— WCO RODNEY MEE, EAST BERLIN



Peeping Tom

McKEAN — A hunter said he went to his camp for the first time in a while, and after getting things in order he had to use the outhouse. Before he could use the facilities, however, he noticed a porcupine sitting on a ledge, just below the toilet seat. It's a good thing he noticed it when he did.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK,
PORT ALLEGHENY

Not Behind the Wheel?

LANCASTER — I received a call from a woman about two deer on the back of a car, but because it was during the archery season, I didn't think much about it. But then she went on to explain that both deer were alive and sitting in the back seat. I sent Deputy Kevin Karmosky to investigate, and he found what turned out to be two Jersey calves being moved from one farm to another.

— WCO THOMAS P. GROHOL, ELIZABETHTOWN

Job Well Done

The folks at the game farms should be commended for raising pheasants that are large, attractive and wily. On opening day I watched a rooster sneak along the edge of a fencerow just out of sight of a young lady, and when she got closer, it ducked into the brush. When she reached the end of the row, the ringneck flushed well behind her and to safety.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

Had Some Luck

LYCOMING — During the early muzzleloader season I came across a hunter who was scratching off an instant lottery ticket. I asked him if he was having any luck and he said he just got three bucks. I jokingly told him that only does were legal, but that I would let this slide by without a citation.

— WCO RICHARD E. MACKLEM,
JERSEY SHORE

Out-Foxed

BERKS — I received a call about a "sick" fox lying next to a building and busy parking lot in Reading. I informed the caller that it's not unusual to see a fox out during the day, and many times they will hunt for prey around buildings in the city. Before I arrived, however, the fox took off, but I located where it had been bedded, and quickly realized that it had found a hot air return to lie on. After I explained why the fox had been at the same spot all afternoon, the employees realized they had been tricked.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON



You Didn't

MERCER — On the second day of buck season I met a 13-year-old hunter who had a big 10-point. Before I could check the boy and his deer, however, his father suggested that, as a joke, I give the youngster a tough time. After seeing that everything was in order, I told the boy I was confiscating his deer because it had been taken illegally. The boy was stunned and speechless as I explained that he was supposed to be in school, and therefore it was illegal to be hunting. Ralph was relieved when his dad and I started laughing.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Ran Out of Excuses

SCHUYLKILL — I was stocking pheasants with Waterways Conservation Officer Clyde Warner when we noticed a truck parked in a road posted "closed to all vehicles." As we approached, I noticed the driver walking back to the truck, carrying a firearm. I asked him what he was doing and he said he had seen a fox. I asked for his furtaker's license, and he said he didn't have one but insisted that he was actually hunting woodchucks. I asked where his orange cap was, and he said he really wasn't hunting chucks, but just came down the road to take a look. After doing everything wrong, he told me he had just attended my Hunter-Trapper Ed class the week before.

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON

Three Little Kittens

SOMERSET — Tim Sanner and his son saw three bobcats on three consecutive days near the same area. They knew they were different cats because all three were different sizes.

— WCO DANIEL W. JENKINS, BERLIN





Uh-Oh

UNION — Deputies Joel Blyler and Tilghman Smith were called to remove a flying squirrel from a residence in Laurelton. Deputy Blyler was searching for the invader on a shelf that held many figurines when suddenly one proved to be the culprit. Before Joel could capture the critter, however, it jumped on his face then scrambled to the top of his head before being netted. The deputies took the flying squirrel away in a cage, but it escaped inside Deputy Smith's vehicle and, despite an intensive search, was never found. Deputy Tilghman recently traded vehicles with Deputy Smith, so we're hoping the new owner doesn't have the same unexpected experience.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

To Each His Own

SOMERSET — Each person's idea of a trophy or memento of the hunting season is different. After my deputies and I finished issuing citations to four individuals for killing a buck and a doe the Friday before buck season, they asked if they could get a picture with me and the deer on my deer rack for their camp photo album. If a picture is worth a thousand words, this picture was worth \$4,800. After some thought, I decided a picture of the four individuals might be useful as evidence later on, so I agreed to the photo.

— WCO SCOTT W. TOMLINSON, JENNERSTOWN

Despicable

BUTLER — Acting on a tip, county detective Dave Summerville and I tried to find marijuana growing on SGL 95, but with no success. Later, however, Deputy Darrell Bowers and I made another attempt, and Darrell was successful. Although the amount seized was not large, what bothered us was that at both plots the growers had placed containers of automobile anti-freeze to kill any animal that might browse on their plants. It's disturbing that these lands that have been set aside for the purpose of conserving wildlife were being used to destroy wildlife.

— WCO CHIP L. BRUNST, WEST SUNBURY

Too Big To Tackle

CLEARFIELD — During buck season Deputy Thad Ishler noticed a coyote trying to bring down a buck that had been shot by a hunter. The deer soon broke free from the coyote, however, and Thad later directed the hunter who had hit the buck to where he last saw it. This just goes to show that coyotes — like most predators — are opportunistic and help keep animal populations healthy by removing the sick and injured.

— WCO DAVID A. CARLINI, CLEARFIELD

Worst Part of the Job

TOIGA — Last fall I investigated two hunting related shooting incidents. Both were mistake for game shootings, and in both cases the victims were not wearing the required fluorescent orange. Fortunately, neither incident was fatal, but both the shooters and victims have to live with the consequences.

— WCO ROBERT F. MINNICH, MANSFIELD

Banner Year

VENANGO — Many hunters reported seeing large antlered bucks this season. It seems the peak of the rut was much later than usual, and hunters were able to find some of these trophies.

— WCO LEO C. YAHNER, FRANKLIN

Sometimes Forgotten

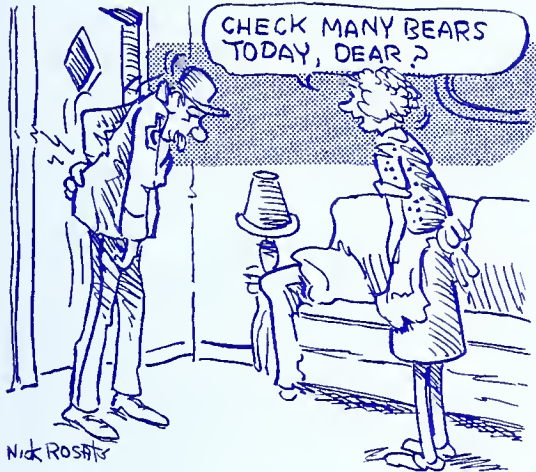
POTTER — Each year I check quite a few hunters who are without any form of identification other than their hunting license. Keep in mind that the failure to produce identification is a violation of the Game and Wildlife Code and is subject to a \$100 fine.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE,
CROSS FORKS

Modern Generation

I was working the bear check station at SGL 208 in Tioga County when a young fellow who had his hair dyed orange brought in a bear. I couldn't help but wonder if his hair met the fluorescent orange requirements in place of a cap.

— LMO STEVEN D. GEHRINGER, MANSFIELD



Bountiful Bruins

WARREN — The bear season turned out to be an exceptional one here, with the more than 90 bears checked in at the Tidioute check station surpassing all previous seasons. Of the bears checked in, only a few had been previously processed and tagged by Game Commission personnel. This may be an indication that the 64 or so bears harvested in Warren County may not be a record for long if the hunting pressure increases and the weather cooperates during the 2001 season.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, TIDIOUTE

Have to Wonder

McKEAN — A Fish and Boat Commission deputy e-mailed me coordinates of a treestand near a baited area, and I easily located it with a GPS. I photographed the area with a Polaroid camera, then with a hand-held radio and strategically located relay towers, I relayed the information to a dispatcher at the Northcentral Region Office 80 miles away. I chuckled thinking about what our first game protectors, who patrolled by trains and horseback, would think if they could see us now.

— WCO LEN GROSHEK, SMETHPORT

Acrobat

The day after Thanksgiving my wife and I were driving on Route 322 when out of the corner of my eye I saw a deer tearing through a field and heading directly at us. I was about to hit the buck when it jumped straight up into the air, did a back flip over the bed of my pickup and landed on its back on the other side of the road. It then struggled to its feet and ran off.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, SOUTHEAST
REGION OFFICE, READING

Good Advice

MONTGOMERY — It's important to get out and scout for gobblers, but many hunters make the mistake of calling during the preseason. Don't do this, because it can make turkeys call-shy by the time the spring season opens.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK

Painted a Picture

CLINTON — Fishers were first introduced in my district in 1995, and I'm often asked what they look like. Occasionally I see one cross the road, and my best description is a frenzied bundle of erratic energy ricocheting across the highway like a bolt of black lightning, then vanishing at the edge of a dimly lit forest as a long bushy tail waves goodbye.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

PGC continues crackdown on illegal deer killings

WHILE most hunters were enjoying the 2-week antlered deer season, Game Commission officers in Somerset and Schuylkill counties were wrapping up cases involving the illegal killing of multiple deer. In Somerset County, WCO Brian Witherite filed multiple charges against four individuals that resulted in \$12,700 in fines for incidents that occurred in Black Township from Oct. 18-23. In Schuylkill County, WCO John Denchak filed multiple charges against three individuals that resulted in \$6,700 for an incident that included a 21-mile car pursuit in East Brunswick Township on Nov. 18.

According to WCO Witherite's report, he and WCO Dan Jenkins received several reports from concerned citizens about possible night hunting. On Oct. 18, while investigating the shooting of an antlerless deer along Walker Road, WCOs Witherite and Jenkins were able to get a description of the vehicle from which shots were being fired.

On Oct. 20, WCO Witherite and Deputy WCO Mike Boyce were investigating shooting on SGL 50. A confidential informant gave the officers a complete description of the vehicle, including the number of occupants and a license plate number. The informant also indicated that he witnessed shots being fired from this particular vehicle on two different occasions on the same road that evening.

On Oct. 23, WCO Witherite provided the license plate information to Pennsylvania State Police Corporal Bob Barns and Trooper James Orbash. That evening, Trooper Orbash stopped the same vehicle for a registration violation and observed open containers of alcohol and a firearm. He contacted WCOs Witherite and Jenkins. With the assistance of Corporal Barns, WCOs Witherite and Jenkins arrested Hubert Richard Burley Jr. of Meyersdale and Ruby F. Sager of Berlin on possession of venison from three illegally killed deer. Burley provided a written statement providing details on where the deer were shot and other individuals who were involved in the incident.

"This case took a while to investigate, but was made possible through the teamwork and perseverance of the Game Commission officers and the Pennsylvania State Police," WCO Witherite said. "Also, without the efforts and actions of a few concerned citizens, this case would have likely gone undetected."

Burley pled guilty to eight counts of unlawful use of lights while hunting. He has been fined \$4,800 and faces the loss of his hunting and trapping privileges. Charges were filed in District Justice Sandra Stevanus' office in Confluence.

Sager pled guilty to three counts of unlawful possession of three white-tailed deer. She has been fined \$1,500

and faces the loss of her hunting and trapping privileges. Charges were filed in District Justice Douglas Bell's office in Meyersdale.

Based on Burley's statement, charges were filed against Calvin Henry, of Rockwood, for eight counts of unlawfully using lights while hunting, one count of possessing illegally taken venison and one count of spotlighting while possessing a firearm. He pled guilty and was fined \$5,900 and faces the loss of his hunting and trapping privileges. Charges against Henry were filed in District Justice Stevanus' office.

Also based on Burley's statement, charges were filed against Donnie Boden, of Somerset, for allegedly unlawfully possessing a white-tailed deer. He faces a \$500 fine and the possible loss of his hunting and trapping privileges. Charges were filed in District Justice Arthur Cook's office in Somerset. Others assisting in the Somerset County case were WCO Stan Norris and Deputy WCOs James Fisher and Ron Marteney.

In Schuylkill County, following a series of complaints about night shooting, WCO Denchak positioned a deer decoy in East Brunswick Township, at 8 p.m., on Nov. 18. Around 10 p.m., a vehicle with three individuals stopped near the decoy. A spotlight was then turned on and three shots taken at the decoy. When WCO Denchak attempted to question the individuals, the vehicle sped off on a 21-mile trek through two townships. During the pursuit, the offender's vehicle struck and killed another deer.

As the vehicle approached Hecla, 17 miles into the chase, two of the vehicle's occupants, both juveniles, jumped out and fled on foot into the woods. One of them had a rifle. The vehicle continued for another four miles, but then the driver abandoned

the vehicle and fled the scene on foot along railroad tracks near New Ringgold. The vehicle was impounded.

On Nov. 20, the alleged driver, Aaron Matthew Krause, 18, of Northampton, Northampton County, turned himself in, identified the others involved, and made a statement about the incident.

Krause was charged with two counts of unlawfully using lights while hunting, which carry a total of \$1,200 in fines and the possible loss of hunting and trapping privileges. He also faces charges for refusing to stop for a law enforcement officer, which carries a \$200 fine, and for resisting arrest, which carries an \$800 fine. Pennsylvania State Police are investigating possible charges of multiple traffic violations and criminal mischief.

The two juveniles, both 17 years of age, face charges of resisting arrest, which carries an \$800 fine, and two counts of unlawfully using lights while hunting, which carries a total fine of \$1,200 each and the possible loss of hunting and trapping privileges. One of the juveniles allegedly possessed an 8-point rack from a previously illegally killed deer, and was charged with allegedly taking or possessing an illegal deer, which carries a fine of \$500 and the possible loss of hunting and trapping privileges.

WCO Denchak said that both rifles used in the incident were recovered, as well as one deer carcass and parts of another.

All charges were filed in District Justice James Ferrier's office in Orwigsburg, Schuylkill County. Assisting in the case were Deputy WCOs Jacqueline DeCindo, Charles Haldeman and Pam Hartz; Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officer Clyde Warner; Orwigsburg Police Depart-

ment; West Penn Police Department; and the Pennsylvania State Police.

"Teamwork is an important part of the Game Commission's law enforcement efforts," WCO Denchak said. "We could not have brought this case to closure without the support of all

the officers involved. Also, that local residents were concerned enough to contact the Game Commission about night hunting was instrumental in our ability to apprehend these people who have no regard for ethical standards of hunting or fair chase."

Bradford County poaching case comes to a close

BARNETT DAVID ZELDIN, 61, of Warrington, Bucks County, was sentenced in Bradford County Court to 30 to 90 days in county prison and fined a total of \$5,700 for criminal trespass charges and 15 counts of violating the Game and Wildlife Code.

The Game and Wildlife Code violations are: three counts of unlawfully taking turkeys, summary offenses of the fourth degree; three counts of possessing turkeys unlawfully taken, summary offenses of the fourth degree; one count of possession of an improperly marked turkey, a summary offense of the second degree; two counts of attempting to take deer unlawfully, summary offenses of the second degree; two counts of unlawfully taking deer, summary offenses of the second degree; two counts of possessing unlawfully taken deer, summary offenses of the second degree; and two counts of possessing improperly marked deer, summary offenses of the second degree.

Zeldin, who operated a guide service, owns a small tract in Bradford County. He committed some of the violations on his own 34 acres, while other animals were poached as he and

his clients trespassed onto neighboring properties.

While serving as a WCO in northern Bradford County, Rick Larnerd — now the law enforcement supervisor of the Northeast Region — started an investigation into reported poaching by Zeldin in 1996. Armed with bits and pieces of mostly anonymous tips, Larnerd began to build the case.

This all came to a head on the second day of buck season, 1999. Zeldin was discovered in a treestand on private property where he did not have permission to be. He was also adjacent to a baited area.

While putting together the case, Larnerd was informed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that it had just completed a 2-year covert investigation of Zeldin.

"When I met with the USFWS agents, I was delighted to find that much of the anonymous information I had received could now be substantiated," Larnerd said.

In March, Special Agent Dede Manera and Larnerd conducted a joint search warrant on Zeldin's hunting camp, in Bradford County, and home

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

in Bucks County.

"The hunting camp search produced evidence of dozens of violations," Larnerd said. Parts of 27 wild turkeys were seized. Deer antlers and photos of unlawfully taken deer were seized as well, as were dozens of videotapes. When subsequently viewed, they depicted Zeldin with many pieces of unlawfully taken game. Most were deer and turkeys, but some footage was of ducks being taken beyond the daily limit. There was even a 3-day hunt where Zeldin guided an 11-year-old on his first turkey hunt.

In May and June, Larnerd filed citations on 39 counts of violations of the Game and Wildlife Code, for charges ranging from illegally taking

turkeys and deer to possessing unlawfully taken wildlife. Zeldin also was charged by Pennsylvania State Police Trooper Albert Ogden for six counts of defiant trespass under the Crimes Code, all misdemeanors.

On Dec. 6, Zeldin was sentenced in Federal Court in Scranton to a concurrent three-year probation and \$10,000 fine for violating the federal Lacey Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Additionally, conditions on Zeldin's probation include: he will not be permitted to hunt, guide or perform any other service related to hunting throughout the United States for the term of his probation; and he will forfeit all illegally harvested wildlife parts, mounts and meat.

Elk meat donated to Salvation Army

THE GAME Commission, Hunters Sharing the Harvest and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation delivered nearly 400 pounds of processed elk to the Salvation Army Food Bank headquarters in Williamsport, Lycoming County. State Sen. Roger Madigan (R-Bradford), who co-authored a Senate Resolution supporting the Hunters Sharing the Harvest (HSH) program, joined in the presentation.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation helped cover the processing costs for the elk, and Ken Brandt, coordinator for the Hunters Sharing the Harvest program, arranged for the Salvation Army to receive the meat.

In 1999, through HSH, hunters donated 85,000 pounds of venison, which allowed food banks to provide more than 200,000 meals for needy families. This past year, in an all-out effort to increase its effectiveness, HSH kicked off its "Give a Buck for the Pot" program, to seek monetary

donations from hunters and nonhunters to help cover the costs of processing the meat.

"As little as \$50 will cover the processing costs of an entire deer, which



John Plowman

ELK meat donation to Williamsport Salvation Army Food Bank. L to R: Dennis McGraw, Regional Director, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; Barry Hambley, PGC Northcentral Region Director; Michelle Gair, Food Bank Coordinator, Salvation Army, Williamsport; Senator Roger Madigan; Ken Brandt, Program Coordinator, Hunters Sharing the Harvest.

provides 200 meals," Brandt said.

HSH was initiated by Pennsylvanians for the Responsible Use of Animals (PRUA), and has since become affiliated with Farmers & Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHFH), a highly successful venison-feeding ministry in Maryland. PRUA operates HSH in cooperation with the Game Commission, the state Agriculture Department, Pennsylvania Chapters of the

Safari Club International, United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Association of Regional Food Banks, the Pennsylvania Deer Association, and the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.

For more information contact, Hunters Sharing the Harvest, 3317 Turnpike Rd., Elizabethtown, PA 17022, or visit HSH's website at www.geocities.com/prua.geo/

PGC to review SGL regulations

IN AN EFFORT to better protect state game lands from misuse and degradation, the Game Commission is reviewing the regulations that define what activities may and may not take place on these lands. "The focus of this review is to identify what uses of state game lands have led to degradation or destruction of wildlife habitat or are having negative impacts on nesting or wintering wildlife populations," said Executive Director Vern Ross when announcing the review.

"Because some of these changes may affect current uses of the game lands, the Commission will seek input from any affected user groups in addressing identified problems."

Ross explained that the agency's legislatively mandated mission is to protect and manage Pennsylvania's wild birds and mammals and to develop, conserve and preserve critical

wildlife habitats. He noted that increased recreational activities not consistent with the agency's mission also may jeopardize its ability to continue receiving federal funds through the Pittman-Robertson program. Last year, the Game Commission received nearly \$7.6 million in Pittman-Robertson funds.

"To begin the public outreach process, we will be creating an advisory committee of various stakeholders to sit down and discuss the many issues we face," Ross said. "The committee will be comprised of hunters, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, horseback riders, hikers, timber industry, water quality interests, tourism industry, and nature enthusiasts."

As this process develops, the Commission will advise the public through the news media, and the Commission website, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Outdoor Heritage 2001 on tap

THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT Conservation Alliance (TRCA), a national alliance of leading conservation groups, is pledging its considerable support to Outdoor Heritage 2001, being held May 3-5 at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds. According to TRCA Director Bob Munson, the group will contribute time, personnel and money to the 3-day celebration.

"Our TRCA trustees, affiliate organizations and individual TRCA partners agree with our hunting and fishing friends in Pennsylvania that we have to work together to share our cultural heritage and natural resource legacy with the rest of the American public," Munson said.

The Outdoor Heritage celebration is a cooperative project of the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation (AHDC). Displays by more than 80 exhibitors last year revealed the diversity of support for the outdoors. Conservation groups, state agencies, historical museums and other groups provided information to the public about the tremendous out-

door opportunities on public and private land. The first year's 2-day event attracted approximately 12,000 people, including many students. Due to the overwhelming response, this year's Outdoor Heritage event will be extended an additional day.

According to Erin Cooley of the AHDC, admission will be free again this year, thanks to the support of TRCA and other supporters.

The TRCA is a national alliance of hunters and anglers working together on National Forest and public lands issues that benefit fish and wildlife, as well as outdoor recreation activities like hunting and fishing. TRCA supports science-based resource management, hunting and angling, a positive image of the field sports — its participants and America's shooting sports heritage — and active land management to sustain and benefit a diversity of fish and wildlife habitats.

For more information about TRCA, contact them toll-free at 1-877-770-TRCA, or visit their website at www.trca.org.

Elk pavilion dedicated

THE GAME COMMISSION'S new pavilion at the Winslow Hill elk viewing area on SGL 311 was dedicated this past October. The new amphitheater enables the Game Commission to offer many more educational programs about elk and other wildlife, in a natural, open-air setting. The roofed pavilion can seat up to 80 people comfortably, has standing room for another 60, and is equipped with a stage and 8- x 8-foot projection screen.



Dan Marks

PGC employees rescue logger

ON A COLD rainy day last April, Wildlife Maintenance Propagator Rick Emick and Game Farm Worker Tim Wheeland were repairing fences on the Northcentral Game Farm when they heard calls for help. After determining that the calls were coming from a hollow about a half mile away, the two notified Perry Shipman and Michael Speary, who were working nearby and had also heard the calls.

While Rick and Tim went to locate the person calling for help, Perry and Mike went to the game farm office and notified their supervisor, Bruce Guinter, of the situation. The three went to see if they could help, and after stopping at a barn and walking to the edge of a field leading to the hollow, the trio saw a logging skidder and loader next to a large pile of cut and de-limbed trees. As they crossed the field they could hear that the skidder's engine was running, and as they rounded the end of the tree pile, they saw Rick and Tim bent over a logger who was pinned under a tree.

The logger had been operating the skidder and had dropped a skid of eight full-length oaks. As he was unhook-

ing the cable grapple attachments, one of the trees rolled from the pile and pinned his left leg to the ground. Bruce radioed 911 for an ambulance while Tim found two planks that Perry, Mike and Bruce used to pry the tree up off the logger's leg enough that Rick and Tim could slide him out. The logger had a badly broken lower leg, was in much pain, and was going into shock.

Rick and Mike covered the logger with their raincoats, and Bruce used his jacket to pad the logger's leg. Rick also held the man's head off the ground and sheltered him from the rain with his body. It turned out that the logger had suffered a complete displaced closed fracture of both the tibia and fibula above the ankle. By this time, the logger's brother, who was felling trees up the hollow, came looking for his brother. The group calmed the brother and comforted the injured logger until the ambulance arrived, then helped the ambulance crew move the logger to the ambulance.

Thanks to the quick thinking of these game farm employees, the logger received quick and thorough medical attention as soon as possible.

Big game scoring sessions on tap

FOR THE FIRST TIME since 1995, the Game Commission will be holding big game scoring sessions for hunters who have Pennsylvania white-tailed deer racks or black bear skulls that they would like to have officially scored.

Those with the top trophies in each category — typical and nontypical whitetail with a firearm, typical and nontypical whitetail with a bow, and black bear — will be honorees at the fall meeting of the Pennsylvania Out-

door Writers Association in September. Results of this scoring session will be listed in *Game News* and added to the agency's official compilation of Pennsylvania big game records.

Watch local news media or next month's *Game News* for exact dates and times for the scoring session in each Game Commission region.

The Game Commission, in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, have held 12 scoring sessions since 1965.

Annual Report Correction

ON PAGE 13 of our annual report in last month's issue, a portion of the text under the "Wildlife Habitat Protection" program plan was accidentally omitted.

We apologize for the error and offered below the complete text for that section.

The Roadsides for Wildlife initiative spearheaded by the Environmental Planning and Habitat Protection Division, continues to expand with the planting of two demonstration areas. The Sideling Hill service plaza along the Pennsylvania Turnpike in Fulton County and part of the interchange area for I-99 and Route 22 at Hollidaysburg in Blair County were planted in the spring of 2000. The warm season grasses (switchgrass, Indiangrass and big bluestem) and forbs (broad-leaved flowering plants) are developing into a diverse grassland habitat that will benefit numerous songbirds and small mammals. PennDOT, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pheasants Forever and the Penn State Agricultural Extension Unit are cooperating in this project.

The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (known as Pittman-Robertson or P-R) was signed into law on September 2, 1937, to provide a stable and secure source of funding to the states for the management, conservation and enhancement of wildlife. Funds for the program are derived from an 11 percent federal excise tax on sporting arms, ammunition and archery equipment and a 10 percent tax on handguns. P-R funds are apportioned to states based upon a ratio combining land area, license sales and total population.

Upon federal approval, the Game Commission spends Game Fund dollars and then requests reimbursement for 75 percent of our expenditures from the USFWS, which administers the program. The Game Commission's apportionment during federal fiscal year 2000 was \$7,602,373. This funding supported habitat management and maintenance activities on state game lands and cooperative public access programs.

New book about backyard wildlife

THE Wild Resource Conservation Fund has published a new book, *Landscaping for Wildlife in Pennsylvania*, by Marcus Schneck, one of Pennsylvania's leading authorities on attracting backyard wildlife. This full-color, 176-page guide features detailed plans for creating specialized butterfly and hummingbird gardens to selecting the precise seeds to interest just the birds you want. Even the underground toad house Schneck invented

to attract the insect eating amphibians is included.

Illustrated with the artwork of Kutztown's Mike Watson and more than 100 full-color photographs, the book also is a pleasure to simply browse.

Landscaping for Wildlife in Pennsylvania is available for a \$20 donation to the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, P.O. Box 8764, Harrisburg, PA. 17105-8764; or call 717-783-1639.

Some beginning hunters have the idea that trophy bucks are behind every tree. They'll learn, soon enough, that in real-life, buck hunting's . . .

Not What You Expect

AT THE ENTRANCE of one of the exhibit buildings at the Adirondack Museum near Blue Mountain Lake, NY, is a painting that tells a story. The painting isn't what you'd expect for the place, and the tale it relates is undoubtedly different with each viewer. I don't know the painter's intent, and I'm glad I don't, because this allows me to imagine.

Rather than the expected heroic outdoors scene featuring brawny, bearded backwoodsmen, the artwork shows a young woman sitting in a nighttime forest. She has long blonde hair, a black-and-red plaid wool shirt and a slouchy hiker hat. Her face is lit by the glow of the campfire. Dark branches of spruce are all around her; there's barely enough space for her between the encroaching trees. The remains of a supper are seen, a pan and some biscuits, I think.

At first glance this painting simply shows a wistful young woman camping in the wilderness, until you look closer. Then you see her eyes have a little too much fire-light glimmer in them. Closer still, you notice the tears that are nearly brimming over her lower lid. Why is she about to cry?

Ar anyone looking at the picture can make up a story, maybe rooting it in his or her own past experiences. Is the girl lost in the



Bob Steiner

THE BUCK you see during deer season may be a small one, not the huge-racked behemoth that's shown in hunting magazines and videos, but even one like this will make a realistic hunter happy, especially late in the season.

woods? Is she sad because the biscuits burned? I think not. I prefer to think that this is a young bride who hiked with her outdoorsman husband "back of beyond." She was game to give the outdoor life a try, to learn to enjoy it and be with the one

she loves. I don't think she has quite given up yet, but she's close to quitting. She has tried so hard, getting scratched and bruised on the trail, and done her best to make a camp supper. Now she's miles from bed and bath, with the darkness of the forest pressing in. She's oh-so-tired and it's all too much.

If her young husband hopes to see his 50th anniversary with his wife, he needs to stop whatever he's doing (the map of tomorrow's trail can wait) and take her in his arms. She just needs a little appreciation, a few kind words and a reassuring hug, and he'll have a camping companion for life. The problem is that the Adirondack wilds were not at all what she expected.

The outdoors is like that for many people. Unless they grew up in it or have an adaptable, live-in-the-moment temperament, the actual outdoors is not what most folks think it will be. I remember reading in Bill Bryson's book, *A Walk in the Woods*, about hikers starting on the Appalachian Trail, intending to go the whole way from Georgia to Maine, more than 2,000 miles. Some turned back with hardly a day in. The reason? It was not what they expected.

The Appalachian Trail is roots and rocks and trees, and more trees and rocks and roots, interspersed with swamp muck. Miles and miles of it. A hiker who expects that and prepares for it and is satisfied with it is fortunate. As for the rest, if the hiking experience doesn't meet their false anticipations, they're to blame, not the trail itself.

Some people go into hunting and find out it's not what they expected it to be. They have unreasonable or ill-founded expectations. Some quit and some persevere. Experienced hunters, who know the realities of the sport, sometimes forget what it's like to be a newcomer with preconceived ideas. Like the young camper's husband, veterans should be aware that the beginning hunters accompanying them might be surprised or disappointed by

hunting's truths. They can help ease neophytes' entry into the sport; the balloon won't burst if there's no balloon.

Like the hikers who thought the Appalachian Trail would always be a sunny walk in the woods but found storm clouds, some new hunters expect a pleasantness that the woods don't often deliver. Opening day of antlerless season this past year answered all expectations. The morning was appropriately cold for mid-December. A feather-soft snow had fallen the day before, leaving five or six inches on the ground. The dawn sky was full of pastels and reflected pinks and lavender onto the snow. When the early sun touched the rime on tree limbs, they turned gold. A windless hush was broken only by rifle shots which, when they were close, made warmly bundled hunters eager in anticipation.

A more perfect wintry morning in the woods could scarcely be imagined, and this may have lulled first-time hunters into thinking that what they expected deer hunting to be, it was. But such exquisite days are the exception. Hunters who were out for antlerless season in 1999, for instance, know what else deer hunting can be. The Monday opener had rain and fog and temperatures in the low 40s; Tuesday was rainier and colder. I figure there were quite a few new hunters that year who looked as dismal as the young woman in the painting, because real deer hunting weather wasn't what they'd expected. Those of us who long ago discarded unreasonable hopes of an ideal deer hunting day were out that "doe" season anyway, in the downpour. In actual hunting, you take the weather you're dealt.

From commercial magazines and hunting videos whose sales depend on showing ever-bigger bucks, beginning hunters may get the mistaken idea that huge racks are the usual fare. They all learn, soon enough, however, that real-life buck hunting is not what they expected it to be. Even if they go into the sport knowing that such monster bucks are not the rule, they may not

be ready for the whole truth. The complete truth is that they will probably never see a buck with record-busting antlers, not unless it's in a wall display at a sport show. Beginning hunters may expect to see herds of big bucks; the reality is they will count themselves lucky to see a buck that is legal each season, let alone shoot it. Experienced hunters know they can continue to dream of giant wall-hangers, but they are happy with the real world's modest bucks.

The hours spent in the woods are also rarely what newcomers expect them to be. Not just in hunting magazine articles and films, but in other hunters' stories, what is told are the events leading up to the kill. What isn't shown and rarely mentioned are the many hours without shooting opportunities, which are the largest part of hunting. These are enjoyable hours afield, if the hunter doesn't have the expectation of getting constant action or of seeing game continually. A lot of the time the trees are all there is to watch.

Many mornings and evenings on stand go by without a deer being seen. Experienced hunters expect these slow periods, knowing that when game appears, too

much will happen too quickly. In the telling, though, the lengthy times without seeing deer are compressed and the brief game-in-sight-shot-taken events are drawn out. This may also be why hunters tell and retell the circumstances around their getting game, to make that short time a little longer by reliving and sharing it.

Many mornings and evenings on stand go by without a deer being seen. Experienced hunters expect these slow periods, knowing that when game appears, too much will happen too quickly.

I recently spoke with the editor of a major national outdoor magazine, who said he was just back from a deer hunting trip to Canada. "How'd you do?" I asked. Knowing he probably had all the advantages of prime hunting location and guides, I expected him to say he got a heavy-racked beauty. "The weather was terrible, rain, wind and snow," he said. "I saw the tail of one deer in a week." I felt a bit justified

that even the experts with such advantages could get skunked, like the rest of us. He didn't sound disappointed, though. I realized that because he had a long history as a hunter, not getting game was not unexpected; it happens to us all. We could both advise newcomers to the sport that if hunting is not what they thought it would be, if they keep at it, they will find it's even better. □

COVER PAINTING BY KEN HUNTER

"CROW-SIZE" is the easiest way to remember how to distinguish the Cooper's hawk from the bigger goshawk and smaller sharp-shinned hawk, which have similar markings. This month's cover, labeled "Hidden Danger," depicts the Cooper's hawk when it's most often seen — in the winter. It seems as though the chickadees in the painting are relatively safe, as this hawk is not in a feeding mode. The Cooper's hawk is often attracted to birdfeeders, where it preys on a host of songbirds. Inhabiting coniferous and mixed forests, Cooper's hawks are extremely agile, weaving and zigzagging their way around trees while chasing birds, which they catch in the air.

LMO Diary

By Brad Myers

Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

In the teeth of winter, Food & Cover crews plow access roads and strips through our food plots on game lands to expose the ground to wildlife. Regeneration cuts are also done this month to benefit wildlife.

THE WORD FEBRUARY comes from a Latin word meaning to “purify.” At one time February was the last month of the year. The ancient Romans purified themselves in February for the festivities

For many of us, during February our hearts and minds are far removed from hunting and cabin fever has set in. Many of us also look with anticipation to what happens in Punxsutawney on February 2. Will the groundhog see his shadow or not? If the sun is shining and he sees his shadow, he'll go back into his burrow and sleep, because there will be six more weeks of winter. If the woodchuck does not see his shadow, he'll stay awake and begin his



LOGGING SHOP students, above, learn valuable cutting and felling techniques, while at the same time perform wildlife habitat work. Assistant instructor Russel Bowser, right, supervises maintenance on the school's skidder before doing work on SGL 244.



in the coming new year. Julius Caesar moved the beginning of the year from March to January, making February the second month. February used to have 30 days until Julius Caesar and then Augustus took days away from it to add to the months named after them.

springtime activities because winter is over. You would think that by seeing sunshine he would want to stay out, but that's how our story goes, and we here in Jefferson County are sticking to it.

Warmer days now and then are encouraging. The tree buds will soon start to swell

and the bluebirds will be returning to find nesting space. The work of the Food and Cover crew continues, as we must prepare for the coming spring.

Week One

With firm ice on most of our wetlands, both county crews are out monitoring, cleaning and repairing wood duck nesting boxes.

The crews collect nesting success data by examining the contents of the boxes. They find that some boxes have not been used, some used by other species, and some used by wood ducks. Many boxes still have wood duck egg fragments, and some have actual egg membranes in them from the previous spring. The crew will examine these pieces to determine if the egg hatched successfully, was eaten by a predator, or failed to hatch for some other reason. This information is then forwarded to our wildlife managers, as well as charted on graphs at our Food and Cover headquarter buildings. We can look at the graphs to compare our success rate from year to year and area to area.

When the guys clean the boxes, they remove all of the old nest material and replace it with a couple inches of new wood shavings. Then after completing any structural repairs, the boxes are ready for another nesting season.

This is a time consuming task, and if there is no ice the crews must work from a flat bottom boat.

I spend time this week looking over aspen regeneration cuts and identifying some new areas to be cut. While on SGL 31 I notice some crabapple trees that still have fruit clinging to their branches. I look at the ground around the trunk and see where wild animals have been digging in the snow to find the fallen fruit. This is the very reason we have planted so many crabapple trees on game lands over the years. If we keep them daylighted and pruned, they produce abundant fruit each year, and the fruit hangs well into the winter.

The week ends with our annual foul weather firearms training held at the shooting range on SGL 72. This is one of the several shoots in our region, and we get a good turnout of deputies and salaried officers. All of the guys attending were sure happy to see that Gary and his crew plowed the snow off the range during the week, as it makes shells and other dropped items easier to find. The Clarion County deputies roasted some hotdogs and provided coffee for everyone, which was quite welcome on this cold day.

Week Two

Aspen and border cutting on game lands keep us busy. Everett's crew is cutting a section or "border" along a grassy road on SGL 244. By completing this cutting we will be able to maintain a shrub border and also allow more daylight to reach the grass growing on the road. We remove the trees and stack or "windrow" them to create brush piles that will be used for wildlife nesting, cover and browse.

Gary's crew is performing an aspen regeneration cut on SGL 72. We have had good success with regenerating aspen and white birch on this game lands. By cutting some of the older and larger aspens in a certain area, the roots will send up many new shoots and regenerate the trees in that stand. We perform these cuts in 1- to 3-acre patches among the surrounding mature trees. We will cut areas every couple of years in a "checkerboard" pattern to provide different ages and sizes of regenerating areas.

Because the average life of an aspen tree is approximately 40 years, we want to regenerate the entire stand before it dies out and is replaced by a less desirable species of tree. As we cut, the fallen trees will produce immediate winter browse for deer. In the spring, the downed trees will provide nesting and escape cover for turkeys, bear, deer, grouse, rabbits and many songbirds. The fallen trees will also provide protection for the new root sprouting seedlings.



PLOWING snow, above, exposes grasses, forbs, grit and fallen mast to wildlife. Notice the orchard grass tufts, right, exposed after plowing this food plot. You can see by the tracks that deer love them.



As these aspen cuts continue to grow, they will provide excellent drumming and brooding areas for ruffed grouse. When these stands become mature, the buds, leaves and catkins will provide important winter foods for grouse as well.

I'm often asked by landowners or camp owners what they can do on their properties for wildlife. It seems like a simple question, but it has a complex answer. Briefly, to benefit wildlife on your property you must consider how much property you have to work with, its makeup (topography, herbaceous, shrub and overstory tree species), and the particular wild animals you want to help. Will you be performing the work, or will you have others help? What is the makeup of the surrounding properties? What species of wildlife already exist on the property?

You see, you must first take some sort of inventory of habitat you already have, such as pine or spruce stands, fields, wetlands, shrub areas, mature deciduous forest, regenerating forest, etc. Second, you must consider the species you're interested in. It would be difficult to manage for gray squirrels and pheasants on the same 10 acres, because their habitat needs are so different. It would be difficult to manage

for pheasant on your 10 acres if you are totally surrounded by hundreds of acres of mature forest. I guess the best I can tell you is to look at your property and the properties around you, learn what the missing habitat element is for the species you want to benefit, and try to supply that element on your property.

For example, we have found on many of our game lands here that the missing habitat element for many species is shrub areas and conifer (spruce or pine) cover to provide winter thermal protection. We are currently trying to address those missing elements through plantings and cuttings.

A general habitat makeup that will be valuable for many different species of wildlife would be 10 percent evergreen cover, 5 percent grassy openings, 25 percent brush or shrub areas, 5 percent standing dead trees, and the rest in hard and soft mast producing trees. Diversity is important, and by this I mean that if you have 10 acres, four scattered ¼-acre blocks of evergreen cover would be better than a single 1-acre stand. It would also be more beneficial to have your grassy openings in irregular shapes instead of in squares or rectangles.

If you are serious about managing for wildlife, walk your property, take notes, read, research, then talk with your local land manager, forester, WCO, conservation district, and cooperative extension representative or, better yet, get involved with local sportsmens clubs that do habitat work.

Week Three

Due to the recent snowfall the crews are out plowing access roads, grassy roads and strips through our food plots to expose the ground to wildlife. This is beneficial and a much better alternative to winter feeding.

In the winter wild animals use enormous amounts of energy looking and digging for food beneath the snow. This becomes even more difficult as the snow melts and refreezes, forming a hard crust on the surface. Have you ever tried to walk in snow that almost holds your weight but then breaks through? Imagine having to dig your dinner out of it. By plowing away the snow from miles of forest roads, grassy roads and food plots, we expose succulent greens, tubers, grit and a multitude of leftover mast.

As Dave Miller and Lee Jordan were plowing on SGL 54 they noticed a flock of turkeys that had immediately moved in to feed on the exposed ground. Wildlife will also use these plowed areas as travel corridors.

You may remember from one of my prior columns that I mentioned stripmowing some of our food plots in the summertime. Well in February, the unmowed strips on our food plots remain above the snow cover. I can now see where the deer have eaten the dry tops of the orchard grass stems that stand exposed in the snow.

Orchard grass grows in "tufts" and if it is left uncut, these tufts will grow seven or eight inches tall with the long stems shooting up from them. In the winter I see where the deer dig down and eat the young tender growth that is still found within these tufts. By plowing strips through our food plots, we expose many of these tufts, mak-

ing it easier for the deer to access them without wasting a lot of energy.

This week Gary and I meet with Keith Harbaugh from the Northwest Region Office, and George Thomas, chief of the PGC Real Estate Division from the Harrisburg headquarters. We discuss an open space easement we control attached to SGL 283, and look over some property in Clarion County that we would like to add to our game lands system. Tom Deitz and I also attend a meeting with Gary Bullars from C&K Coal Company to discuss the potential for some habitat work on some of their property enrolled in our Farm-Game program.

This week I'm presenting a bluebird program to students and faculty at the Soldier Christian Academy. We make plans to set them up with all the materials to start a bluebird nesting box trail as a school project. The students will then be responsible for monitoring and maintenance of the boxes each spring.

Mike Girosky, Roger Hartless and I attend a retirement dinner for local magistrate George Miller. We present him with a Senior Wildlife Conservation Award for his many years of service to the community and his commitment to conservation. George is the son of the late "Moose" Miller, who was a retired game protector and somewhat of a local legend. George's son is now following in his grandfather's footsteps and has become a LMO in the Northwest Region.

Week Four

This week starts off with law enforcement hearings from deer season. WCO Rich Cramer and I cited some individuals for attempting to locate game through the use of a vehicle, commonly known as "roadhunting." We apprehended them after we noticed they were driving at a very slow speed on a back road with their windows down. After we had followed them for miles, they finally saw some deer and jumped out with rifles in hand, all while

leaving the car in the middle of the road with the doors wide open. Although they didn't shoot at a deer (there were no bucks) it is still roadhunting. At the hearing they were found guilty, because WCO Cramer was prepared and presented our case well.

I spend a day this week with Gary and another with Everett to finalize our annual work plans and habitat goals for the coming year.

All through the year the three of us make notes, formulate ideas, inspect different areas and brainstorm with the other members of the crew to come up with a list of what we want to achieve on each game lands. My crews are interested in improving habitat, and they come up with many good ideas that we have made into projects.

In the coming year we are planning to improve wetland areas, create new parking lots, establish some new food plots, complete many conifer block plantings for winter thermal cover, improve the brushpiles in our rabbit management areas, complete scattered shrub plantings, perform aspen regeneration cuts, and open up some grassy roads through old clearcuts.

We will also continue to maintain the existing buildings, grounds, roads, gates, impoundments and food plots, and by the end of the day, we even know how many culverts we intend to clean on game lands this year. I will also meet with Farm-Game managers Tom Deitz and Lee Jordan to plan what we want and are able to accomplish in our Farm-Game program during the coming year. This will include maintaining existing properties, signing up new properties, and habitat work to be done on these lands.

These couple of days spent on intense planning set the stage for what we want to accomplish in the next year. After my planning meeting, I will make some final decisions on projects then submit the whole package to the region office for approval.

They will request changes or approve it before sending it to Harrisburg for final approval.

I spend a day checking the progress of an aspen regeneration cut being performed by the Jefferson County Dubois Vocational Technical School (Jeff-Tech). As far as I know this school has the only lumbering shop in the state, and one of my Food and Cover employees (Scott Hepler) is a graduate of this program. School Director Rod Heininger administers the program, the shop instructor is Jim Wolf, and assistant instructor is Russel Bowser.

We have a good working program with this school to help educate future loggers and timber operators in the safe application of their trade, and at the same time teaching them about wildlife habitats. Because a game lands tract is only 10 minutes from the school, we have set work plans to provide these students with the field experience they need to apply what they have learned in the classroom.

In this case the students will learn important cutting and felling techniques, and at the same time accomplish an aspen regeneration cut several acres in size. The students must learn to work within contract guidelines, which includes many stipulations in the layout of the work area, saving certain tree species, maintaining clear access roads and working with utility companies. This program has been a win-win situation for everyone. Local support for this program has been great, and as more people learn about what we are doing here, there seems to be an interest in starting similar programs elsewhere. These students have done a good job for us, and the sportsmen should be proud of what they are accomplishing.

We again finish this month with reports, but now we have renewed goals for another year of habitat work to accomplish in the spring, which is just around the corner. □

You just never know what in the way of wildlife, coming from the Little Juniata, will show up at Marcia's homestead.

Visitors from the River

OCCASIONALLY we are reminded that the Little Juniata River flows past the northeast end of our mountain, when unexpected visitors from the river appear here. Imagine, for instance, my husband Bruce's surprise when driving down our narrow, gravel, wooded, hollow road one spring morning and encountering a large snapping turtle plodding up toward

him. This happened twice in the almost 30 years he commuted to State College. One turtle was only a quarter of a mile from the river, but the other had made it more than a mile. In both cases, Bruce stopped the car and waited patiently for it to get out of the way.

Each time I was green with envy and rushed down to look for the reptile. I was hopeful that the turtle was a female and looking for a place to lay her eggs. After all, the American or common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina serpentina*) has been known to live in small streams like ours, and to bury a clutchful of 11 to 83 white eggs in the mud of streambanks. But both times we never saw another sign of a snapping turtle. Whatever they had been doing on our road, they obviously had turned around at some point and headed back to more suitable habitat in the river.

Water birds have also made unexpected visits here. Last April Bruce saw a belted kingfisher sitting on a tree branch at the edge of First Field, at least a mile and a half from the river. Because April is a migration month for kingfishers, it may have been resting before moving down to the river, where belted kingfishers have nested for years in the riverbank. As we cross the



one lane, steel bridge over the river, we often see them flying back and forth and hear their loud, rattling calls. Sometimes one even perches on the wooden bridge railing.

A more frequent avian visitor has been the great blue heron. Still, I was startled to flush one from the edge of the Far Field one morning. According to Robert W. Butler, who has written the definitive account of this species for *The Birds Of North America*, although great blue herons are primarily fish eaters, they will stalk over upland fields in search of voles and other rodents. Yearlings, which often have a hard time catching fish, are most likely to hunt for small mammals in fields. So, perhaps, that great blue heron I saw, and the others that occasionally fly over our First Field, are not out of place at all, but merely searching for food.

Probably the most amazing avian river visitor appeared here on October 4, 1989. It was one of autumn's glorious days — breezy, cloudless and crisply cool. As I descended First Field through the locust grove, I heard a high-pitched *cree-cree-cree*. It could only have been an osprey. I stopped and scanned the sky with my binoculars. Finally, I spotted it circling above me, with a fish clasped tightly in its talons.

It made several passes over the field and then flew to a tree branch on Sapsucker Ridge where it stood and silently looked around. Moving slowly, I sat down in the locust grove and watched it through my binoculars. The top of its white head glowed in the sunlight, while its broad, dark eye and cheek stripe flowed down the back of its neck like a cowl. It sat motionless, ignoring the fish in its talons, and only looked alertly around when a nearby pileated woodpecker called.

After half an hour, I slowly stood up and started moving toward the osprey, hoping for a closer view. This aroused it from its reverie, and it started calling again as if warning me off. Then it leaned forward, displaying snowy white underparts, and

took flight, still grasping the brown fish it had probably caught in the river. No doubt it had been migrating, as the migration period for ospreys in Pennsylvania extends from the second or third week in August to the fourth week in October.

Our mammal visitors from the river have been even more surprising because our Plummer's Hollow stream, which originates from springs in First Field, is never much more than five feet wide as it flows the mile and a half down to the river. Because, in summer and fall, it is often barely a trickle, it does not support fish, but it does have a good population of crayfish and provides a damp environment for salamanders.

So what was a mink doing halfway up the hollow, poking its nose in woody debris spanning the stream one April day in 1997? Mink, after all, prefer to eat muskrats, although they will settle for small mammals such as voles, mice, shrews, cottontails and even squirrels, all of which live in our hollow. And crayfish are a favorite summer food, followed by muskrats, frogs, fish, snakes, small mammals and waterfowl.

Again, I was not lucky enough to see the mink, but Tim, one of our hunters, was taking a noonday walk, and got an excellent view of it. Perhaps it was a female in search of a den site, because mink will sometimes construct dens along the banks of streams or under stumps and logs, and they commonly give birth in April or May. But they usually take over abandoned muskrat houses and, so far, we have not seen muskrats up here.

Early last May another hunter friend, Jeff, drove up to show us the body of a nursing mink he had found by the side of the highway next to the river. As we admired her almost untouched, silky, chocolate brown coat, we could see why mink fur is so popular. Her death by car meant that her litter of from four to nine probably perished, although both parents do rear the young and bring food to the den. But weaning the kits does not begin until they are five to six weeks old. Because wild mink

usually live three to six years, we wondered if the dead female was the same mink Tim had seen three springs ago? As usual, nature presented us with more questions than answers.

Then, last February 27, we had our strangest visitor yet from the river. It was 42 degrees and overcast at dawn. Misty rain had been falling off and on for days, and most of the snow had melted. Every spring on the mountain spouted water into our stream. Lying in bed, I could hear water rushing down the drainage ditches. Another dull day, I thought, as I listened to one of three wintering song sparrows singing.

But, as I went into the kitchen, the intercom buzzer from our guesthouse went off. Our eldest son, Steve, who was visiting for the weekend, yelled, "Mom, come quick! There's a beaver in the stream below the guesthouse."

At first I didn't believe him. But as he insisted, I grabbed my binoculars, pulled on my boots and jacket, and ran down in time to see an adult beaver emerge from the culvert pipe beneath the road. I was amazed at how large it was, especially when it stood up on its hind legs beside the drainage ditch to look around. We had plenty of time to study its paddle-shaped tail lying flat on the lawn and admire its sleek, dark brown coat.

Although our sons Dave and Steve stood with me on the guesthouse porch fewer than 50 feet from the beaver, quietly talking, it seemed supremely unconcerned by us. Perhaps it was looking over the terrain and trying to decide if it had potential as a future home. But two houses and three adult humans were probably enough to discourage it. After five minutes of apparent indecision, it continued up the drainage

ditch toward the powerline right-of-way, wading through the six inches of flowing water.

I rushed back to our house to rouse Bruce. Together we ran up our driveway to the powerline ahead of the beaver. While I stood on one side, scanning downstream with my binocular, Bruce crossed the ditch and set up his camera and tripod on the embankment above.

When the beaver came into view, I called quietly to Bruce, "Here it comes."

Remaining still and out of sight, I watched while the beaver attempted to climb over a fallen tree and then toppled over backward.

Undeterred by that setback, it tried again and made it over what must have been the last of dozens of fallen trees that span the stream.

It waddled determinedly up the ditch, by then only intermittently filled with runoff water. Finally, it sensed Bruce above it and stopped. Again it sat up on its hind legs and peered toward Bruce, who shot picture after picture before the beaver slowly turned around and headed downstream. Again we watched from the guesthouse porch as it went down into the culvert pipe and emerged in the stream directly below us. Hopeful that it might set up housekeeping in our marshy meadow, I didn't follow it down the mountain. But our marsh is only an acre at most, and it doesn't have enough of the preferred winter food trees — aspen, sugar maple, tulip poplar and willow — or the aquatic plants, forbs and grasses that beavers eat in the summer. They also like flat terrain or valleys and large streams with enough water for damming. Like the mink, the beaver ultimately rejected our marginal beaver habi-



tat, or so we surmised. Still, I searched the stream for several days before giving up hope.

Probably the beaver we saw was a 2½-year-old that had voluntarily left its parents' lodge and was looking for a home of its own. But according to the books I checked, it was a couple months ahead of schedule. Usually a mature beaver leaves its parents and younger siblings between

April and September and becomes a floater segment of the population, following water courses as far as 12½ miles from its natal home in search of its own turf.

This beaver, like many of the wild animals we encounter here, had not read the books and had instead set out on its own during February's thaw, convinced by the sound of running water that spring was here to stay. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Identify Me

Identify the mammal from the clues given and write your answer in the space provided, then place the letter above the corresponding numbers below to unscramble the phrase.

I am a shy nocturnal mammal that hunts for smaller game such as porcupines, squirrels, rodents and small birds. I sometimes get blamed for killing deer, and I resemble a domestic pet, only larger. Who am I?

$$\overline{3} \quad \overline{\quad} \quad \overline{\quad} \quad \overline{\quad} \quad \overline{2} \quad \overline{\quad}$$

I leave my identifying signs on saplings or shrubs by chewing bark at 45 degree angles a foot or so above the ground. My coat blends in well with winter's white or patchy brown and white range. There are two of us. Who are we?

$$\frac{12}{7} \qquad \frac{9}{1} \qquad \frac{13}{13}$$

My trails are obvious to hunters, and a herd of us will “yard” in conifers during deep snow. I will paw away snow in farm fields to find grass. Who am I?

11 8 4 6 10 5

What are the keys to observing winter's wildlife?

$$\frac{3}{2} \frac{1}{9} \frac{10}{10} \quad \frac{2}{11} \frac{6}{2} \frac{1}{4} \frac{5}{12} \frac{4}{13}, \quad \frac{3}{7} \frac{1}{4} \frac{8}{6} \frac{6}{6}$$

answers on p. 64

Straight from the Bowstring

By Mike Raykovicz

Once adjustments are made to the bow and it's set for optimum performance, one of the most neglected aspects of accuracy can be addressed: it's now time to . . .

Tune Arrows for Accuracy

AT THE CLOSE of last hunting season a young man who had recently taken up bowhunting asked what kind of season I had had. Before I could answer, he informed me he had had a great time with his new archery tackle and couldn't wait until the next year. The only problem, he informed me, was that he had several shots at deer and missed every one. I asked him how much he had practiced, and he assured me he was diligent about shooting several times each week. "I was getting good groups with my practice arrows," he said. When I asked him how his arrows flew after he installed his broadheads, he looked at me with what can best be described as a quizzical stare. "Broadheads are expensive," he said. Almost sheepishly, he added, "Do you think I needed to shoot them?"

Every archers' goal is to have their arrows fly where they are aimed. It's a simple idea, but it can be problematic unless shooters have a general idea of what details contribute to good arrow flight. But before arrow performance can be addressed, it's imperative to examine the factors contributing to shooting accuracy and what steps can be taken to ensure the tackle being used is optimally tuned to achieve that accuracy.

An arrow will never fly accurately un-



A PROPERLY installed arrow nock will be in line with the center axis of the shaft, and proper nock alignment is critical for vane clearance of bow cables.

less the bow, nock and arrow rest are properly adjusted. For archers purchasing their tackle through a pro shop, these adjustments seldom pose a problem. While you might pay slightly more for a good bow, quiver and other equipment, services provided by the shop owner will more than make up this slight additional cost. The pro shop owner will adjust the bow's draw length and draw weight, install a kissers button or peep sight, and add the proper arrow rest for the type of shooting you will do. You can even try several release aids, all before you leave the store.

In addition to these services, the pro shop owner will recommend the proper

spine for the arrow matching your draw weight and he will give you a choice of arrow components such as vanes, feathers, and even nock types.

In contrast, prospective bowhunters buying their tackle from a discount store may get a lower price, but that's all they get. Without tuning, it is unlikely their new equipment will deliver the accuracy inherently engineered into that equipment by the manufacturer. The basic premise to good arrow flight is a well-tuned bow coupled with well-tuned arrows.

To tune a bow properly, an accurately spined shaft should first be shot through a paper target. Some shooters go so far as to shoot a shaft from which the fletching has been stripped because the bare shaft is very unforgiving of shooting errors. Shooting an arrow through a sheet of paper gives the shooter important feedback on how the arrow is leaving the bow. The resulting evidence can then be used to make adjustments in nock location, rest adjustment and choice of arrow spine.

For example, a downward tear indicates the nocking point is set too low, while an upward tear indicates the nock is set too high. A tear in the paper that leans either right or left, indicates the arrow is spined incorrectly or that the arrow rest is adjusted improperly. Once these adjustments are made and the bow is set for optimum accuracy, our attention can now turn to one of the most neglected aspects of archery accuracy: the arrow.

For centuries, wood was the material of choice for making arrows. Needless to say, yesterday's wooden arrows cannot compare to the arrows available to archers today. Modern arrows, made with materials such as aluminum or graphite, give archers plenty of options when it comes to straightness. Aluminum arrows are incredibly straight, varying no more than several thousandths of an inch. Easton's new aluminum Super Slam arrows vary no more than plus or minus .0015 of an inch. Generally speaking, the more expensive the

shaft the straighter it is, and the straighter it is, the better it will shoot.

If the straightness of aluminum shafts is impressive, then the newer carbon arrows are even more so. Some high grade carbon or carbon composite arrow shafts have a straightness factor of .001 of an inch. They are only slightly more expensive than aluminum shafts and are gaining favor with more archers each year.

Shafts, either aluminum or graphite, manufactured in the same lot are likely to be pretty consistent in straightness and weight, but some 3-D and target archers go so far as to weigh their newly acquired shafts much like benchrest shooters weigh their bullets. They select those shafts with approximately the same grain weight adding their own inserts, fletching and nocks.

Fine tuning arrows is being taken to the limit by an increasing number of arrow manufacturers. Game Tracker's Carbon Express arrows can be fitted with color-coded weight tubes that allow the archer to control total arrow mass and, thus, kinetic energy. The weight tubes are like straws fitting inside the carbon shaft. The yellow tubes increase total arrow weight by five grains per inch and the red tubes by three grains per inch. This increased total mass will increase penetration without affecting spine recommendations.

After weighing their arrows and checking components, many serious 3-D and target archers go so far as to number their arrows and carry a card on which the flight characteristics of the numbered arrows are printed. They do this knowing there is a difference in the way each arrow flies. If this seems extreme, consider how well many of these archers shoot. Most hunters may not go to this extreme, but they should be aware that an imperfect arrow may not fly well, so being fussy can pay dividends during hunting season.

I used to buy my arrows off the shelf, but now I have the shafts cut to length and then weigh each component, such as inserts and nocks before personally install-

ing them. Weighing arrow components produces finished arrows having a total mass within a few grains of each other. Arrows of similar weight produce better groups than arrows having a greater disparity in total weight.

This fact has not been lost on some arrow manufacturing companies. Tru-Flite Arrow Company has come out with its Pro Series of complete arrows. The company guarantees every Pro Series arrow meets exact nock and vertical vane tolerances. Completed arrows are passed through a patented checking die that guarantees consistent vane placement from one arrow to the next.

Benchrest shooters know that in order for a bullet to strike in the same place each time, three factors must be considered: the bullet, the gun and the shooter. The same thing is true in archery. In order for an arrow to consistently shoot to the same impact point, the arrow, bow and shooter must perform exactly the same for each shot. Because the shooter is the most critical and weakest link in this equation, it stands to reason that if the other two factors remain the same, bad shooting can be blamed directly on the shooter.

The archery pro shop I occasionally haunt recently acquired a device that allows the shop owner to tune bows and to select arrows so that they will fly to the same point of aim, usually hitting the same hole from 20 yards. The device I've seen is called the "Hooter Shooter" and is manufactured by Spot-Hogg Archery Products in Harrisburg, Oregon.

For a modest fee, an archer can have his arrows shot from the device to determine which arrows produce the best groups. The device holds the client's bow and allows the operator to mechanically draw, hold and release the arrow. The bow can be adjusted and arrows selected and marked for the most optimum shooting accuracy.

Keep in mind the weight range within each arrow component varies considerably,

so trying to find a perfectly matched set of arrows without using specialized equipment can be an impossible task for the average shooter. For example, nocks, inserts and plastic vanes can vary significantly in weight. The Hooter Shooter can, and will, find those arrows capable of hitting the same hole. These arrows can then be marked and used for hunting.

While weighing vanes and other arrow components can be tedious, it is, nevertheless, a prerequisite to perfect arrow flight. Believe it or not, vanes from the same manufacturer vary in weight depending on the color of the vane. Individual aluminum inserts vary even more so.

Once the arrows are assembled and the archer is satisfied that the components match as closely as possible, the next step is to check the clearance of the fletching with the bow. In fine tuning an arrow, many archers fail to take into account fletching clearance, a critical and often overlooked factor when striving for perfect arrow flight. A properly spined arrow that shoots poorly almost always is making contact with some part of the bow after release.

A tuned arrow should not oscillate on its way to the target. A tuned bow and crisp release contributes to this process but so does the fletching. Large fletching, especially feathers, compensates for errors in release and contributes to good arrow flight, provided the fletching material does not come in contact with the bow riser or arrow shelf. A properly tuned arrow will not contact any bow component, but steps have to be taken to ensure this will happen.

Each arrow being used for target practice or for hunting should be placed in position on the arrow rest and nocked on the bowstring. By sighting down the arrow shaft, the archer can visually check for potential clearance problems. Because fletching clearance is often overlooked by the average archer, poor shots often result without the shooter understanding what went wrong.

If a visual inspection doesn't indicate the fletching is contacting the bow but the arrow still shows some wobble, spray a white foot powder on the arrow shaft and fletching. Shoot the powder-dusted arrow into a target located a short distance away and check for streaks on the arrow and the bow shelf. If the powder reveals that the arrow is contacting the bow on release, slightly rotate the nock until the arrow clears the bow and cables.

Many archers regard an arrow nock as simply the little plastic gizmo that holds the arrow on the bowstring. Serious archers understand its function is much more important than that and that it plays a significant role in arrow tuning. Misaligned nocks cause arrows to fly erratically because the thrust of the bow is to one side of the arrow's center. A misaligned nock can be responsible for a missed shot or, worse yet, a wounded animal. Nock installment and rotation are important steps in fine tuning an arrow so that the fletching clears the bow and its cables.

Before gluing a nock on an arrow, place it on the arrow and nock the arrow on the string. Sight down the arrow and rotate it so that the fletching clears the bow and cable. Mark the position of the nock on the arrow with a felt tipped pen and remove the arrow from the string. Remove the nock from the arrow and, using as little glue as possible, align the mark on the nock and the arrow to ensure the arrow's fletching clears the bow. After the glue dries, check the alignment of the nock to see if there is a wobble.

With Easton's UNI-Nock system, the arrow end is cut square and a specially designed bushing inserted. The nock is then fitted into the bushing and the arrow turned until it is clear of all bow parts. It is an excellent idea and worth the additional cost. Easton has since come out with its line of Super Slam Select arrows, which eliminates the bushing altogether. The nock end of the new Super Slam Select arrow is accurately swaged so that the nock

fits perfectly on the tapered end. The folks at Easton say with this arrangement there is less weight and more energy transfer to the arrow.

For consistent arrow flight the nock and broadhead should be checked for alignment with the center axis of the arrow shaft. One of the neatest gadgets I've seen for checking nock and broadhead alignment is a simple device called the "Arrow Inspector." Manufactured by Pine Ridge Archery Products, it is one of those devices that actually does what it claims to do. The device features low friction, machine cut, steel axles and precision cut aluminum wheels that detect the slightest bend in an arrow shaft or an unbalanced arrow.

The arrow shaft is placed across overlapping disks and given a spin. If the nock or broadhead is not attached perfectly straight, a wobble will be apparent. The nock can be replaced and before the glue on the new nock dries, the arrow can be spun and any needed adjustments made for a perfect alignment. The Arrow Inspector will also indicate if a shaft is slightly out of line. This is useful information if the hunter wishes to reuse a shaft that was shot more than a few times.

The Arrow Inspector can also quickly check the balance of the feathers and vanes on the arrow. To check fletching balance, place the arrow on the device and leave the arrow in one position. The wheels of the Arrow Inspector are so sensitive that a feather or vane having too much glue will cause the shaft to rotate. If this happens, the arrow can be removed and the fletching checked. Out of balance arrows can then be removed from the hunting quiver.

If all this seems like too much trouble, consider that acceptable broadhead control is a product of good arrow flight. A broadhead flying in a perfectly straight path will hit the target with more of its energy than a wobbling arrow. This could mean the difference in complete or partial penetration of the arrow on a deer. When hunting, I strive for complete penetration of the

arrow, because with an entrance as well as an exit wound, the blood trail is much easier to follow.

Once the arrow has been matched and tuned, attention must be paid to the way the broadhead aligns with the arrow shaft. The broadhead tip must be aligned with the center of the arrow shaft. If it is not so aligned, the spinning arrow will wobble on its way to the target and fly inconsistently. After installing the broadhead, I like to place the arrow on the arrow-tuning device and give it a spin. If the broadhead is out of alignment, it will quickly become apparent because of a wobble at the tip of the head. If there is no wobble, the arrow is placed in my quiver, ready to take afield.

Tuning a hunting arrow can be tedious work, but it can also be a labor of love. Like preseason scouting, I get great satisfaction in checking my equipment and tuning my arrows prior to each hunting sea-

son. If I find a broadhead that won't spin properly, I remove the insert, re-glue it into the shaft, and try aligning the broadhead again. I never reuse an arrow for hunting once I shoot it at a deer. If the shot misses, I use a new arrow for the next shot.

Archers are enticed by bows touting speed and more speed. Far too many archers are concerned about how fast a bow can shoot and little else. Speed is good to a point, but it is of no real advantage if the shooter can't consistently hit what he aims at. Accurate shooting takes a properly tuned bow, an archer with the proper shooting skills, and perfectly matched arrows. In 3-D or target archery, small details often mean the difference between first and last place. In bowhunting, these same small details can make the difference between a clean kill and a wounded animal. Perfectly tuned arrows can make that difference. □

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"One size fits all" certainly doesn't apply when selecting a shotgun. One stock length isn't satisfactory for all hunters, and this is especially true for older hunters.

Nomenclature of a Shotgun Stock

IT WAS a low point in my life. I was out of work and faced with a variety of bills. I sold what little shooting equipment I had, including a double-barrel 20-gauge Stevens I had purchased new in 1937 for less than \$20. Things got so bad I even sold a new 1950 car I had recently purchased. It would be a long November for me without my 20-gauge Stevens. My wife, Helen, insisted I buy a hunting license, however, because she was sure I could borrow a shotgun.

Several days before the small game season a relative came to my rescue with a 12-gauge Model 12 Winchester pump and two boxes of high brass shells. With my financial problems still unsolved, some of the normal excitement of opening day was absent, but at least I could go. By the end of the day, however, I was not only depressed financially, but also really disgusted with the events of opening day.

Rabbits and grouse were plentiful, but all I had was a pocketful of empty shells. Winchester's Model 12 ranks as one of the finest shotguns in the history of modern firearms. However, the one I was using was not designed for my 5-9 build. The stock was too long and caught under my arm on quick shots. When I did manage to shoul-

der the gun properly, it was cumbersome and difficult to swing.

Why was this shotgun's stock so long? Well, its owner stood more than six feet tall and had long arms. To make the Model 12 fit him, a wide wooden spacer had been placed between the stock and recoil pad, which was also thick. I have no measurements, but I'm sure he had added at least one and a half inches to the stock's original length. The standard Model 12s of the 1930s had a 14-inch length of pull. Adding an inch or more increased its length of pull to probably 15½ inches, or about two inches more than I could handle.

The "too long" stock is still a common problem for many small game hunters. Unfortunately, there's a psychological aspect involved that keeps many hunters from shortening a stock. First, there's the erroneous belief that shortening the stock will throw the gun out of balance. That isn't true when only a half inch to an inch of wood is being removed. There is also a feeling that the factory knows best, and if a short stock was better, the factory would have provided it. If that is true, it's just as logical to assume a shoe manufacturer should make all shoes size 12.

Truth is that one stock length just isn't satisfactory for all hunters, and this is especially true with older hunters. For decades, I cut my stocks to 13³/₈ inches from the face of the trigger to the end of the recoil pad. At 79, my body is stiffening, so to speak, and far less supple. And while I can still use that length, dropping down to 13 inches would be better.

Shotgun shooting is normally "reflex" type shooting. Unlike the rifle, which is aimed, the shotgun is pointed, and the action takes place in a matter of seconds. Because there is so little time to adjust the stock to the shooter's shoulder pocket, it's imperative for a shotgun to fit. If it doesn't come to the shoulder in one fluid motion and nestle immediately into the shoulder pocket, the brand, model or type of action will be of little consequence. There's no getting around it; a poor fitting shotgun makes it difficult to hit moving targets.

One time while hunting ringnecks I was walking in a field along the edge of a woods when two quick shots rang out. A few sec-

onds later, a rooster came out of the woods, flying to my left. Thinking one of our hunting party had flushed the bird, I swung through it, slapped the trigger and watched it tumble. After reloading, I started for the bird when a big dog bounded out of the woods and beat me to the rooster. As I tried to persuade the dog to give up the bird, a hunter came out of the woods.

"Good, I'm glad to you got it," the hunter said. "Give me the rooster, Rusty." The hunter was a young lady, and after retrieving the bird she gave it to me. I apologized for shooting a bird she was after, but she just laughed and said she wasn't doing too well with her new, full choke 12-gauge autoloader. I know she wasn't more than 5-3, and I could tell that the stock was a mile too long. As we talked, I told her the problem might be in the stock's length. After unloading her shotgun, I asked her to shoulder it quickly. She tried twice, but the butt plate never hit the shoulder pocket. Handing her my empty 20-gauge over/under with its 13³/₈-inch stock, she had no problems. I suggested having a competent gunsmith shorten the stock to 13 inches, and if she wanted to cut down on the total overall length, she should consider a double or over/under with 26-inch barrels bored improved cylinder and modified.

"Thanks for your advice," she said with a big smile. "I have a friend who likes this autoloader and, after handling your over/under, I'm going to get one." I never saw her again,

Helen Lewis



DON LEWIS' longtime hunting partner MILTON ANDERSON of Greenoch examines a plump cottontail he stopped with his 20-gauge Savage 330 (now discontinued). The stock fits the shooter like a glove, making tough shots seem easy.

but I'll bet a box of shells she sold the autoloader and bought an over/under and then had the stock cut down.

There are other important stock dimensions, such as pitch and drop, which help determine where the pattern will hit. Comb and heel drop represent the vertical measurement in inches from an imaginary line running back from the top of the barrel to the top of the comb and heel of the stock at the butt plate. Many older shotguns have too much drop, causing the guns to shoot low and forcing the comb into the shooter's cheek.

Pitch can be determined by placing the shotgun flat on its recoil pad, with its action touching a wall. The distance in inches from the muzzle to the wall represents the amount of pitch (or tipdown). Pitch and drop have a major impact on the vertical control of the pattern.

I think it's safe to say that most American shotgun manufacturers are sticking with the pistol grip type stock. The Monte Carlo comb is being used on some hunting guns and basically all competitive shotguns. A stock with a Monte Carlo comb has several distinct advantages. To start with, it's the same height at both ends in relation to the barrel rib. This keeps the eye at the same height, no matter which way the shooter swings. What's so important about this? On a conventional stock, the more a right-handed shooter swings to the left (the other way for left-handed shooters), the more the cheek will slide forward on the comb. Moving in the opposite direction, the shooter's face is pulled to the rear. This causes the eye to fall out of alignment with the rib. Because the Monte Carlo comb slopes from the rear to the front, the comb is able to slide under the cheek instead of pushing up into it. This helps cut down on bruising the cheek when firing a long string of shots or using magnum loads.

It should be obvious that a hunter must have a stock that is of the correct length and has the proper drop, and a comb with

the right thickness. When a shotgun is brought to the shoulder, it must become an integral part of the entire upper body. This may sound confusing, but a shotgun that doesn't fit its user is what could be called excess baggage. Here's a good example.

During the Depression era, one of my brothers used a single-shot 12-gauge that belonged to a schoolteacher who had quit hunting due to health reasons. If looks meant anything, the old battered shotgun was just a relic. I have no idea what made the gun was; we called it a Navy gun due to its barrel thickness at the breech. My brother and his borrowed shotgun were the butt of many jokes until the hunting season arrived. My brother was a fair rabbit shot and better than average on grouse. He and the 12-gauge blended together like the proverbial horse and carriage. He shot more game that season than he had in the three seasons before.

During his second season hunting with the old gun, his wife and her father presented him with a spanking new 12-gauge pump that had a fiddle-back grain in the stock. The antiquated single-shot was returned. During the remainder of that season his score plummeted like a rock falling off a cliff. He was not a large man, and the new pump's stock was too long. The overall length of the pump made it difficult for him to take quick shots in brush. Although he used the pump for many years, refusing to have any stock alterations made, because he insisted that altering its length would ruin the stock, he often talked about his success with the old Navy gun.

Rabbit and grouse hunters especially should be concerned with the fit of their shotguns. There is usually less time to adjust to an improper stock length than when shooting at doves, pheasants and waterfowl. If your foot is a size 8, why would you want to wear a size 11 shoe? Removing an inch from a shotgun stock that's too long could make all the difference in the world. □

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

Despite warm weather, hunters in Virginia took 189,572 deer in 1999. Loudoun County was tops with 6,665.

Hunters in New York took 685 bears in 1999. There were 523 taken in the Adirondacks, 112 in the Catskills, and 50 in the Allegany Range. Herkimer County was tops with 77 bruins taken.

A state-by-state duck harvest survey revealed the following average number of birds taken per hunter in 1998: Louisiana, 23; California, 22; Arkansas, 20; Tennessee, 17; Mississippi, 16; Florida, 15; Nevada, 15; Utah, 13; Texas, 13; and Missouri, 13.

Hunters in Oklahoma enjoyed their safest year ever in 1999. With more than 310,000 licensed hunters in the state, only four hunting incidents were reported.

A survey found that the majority of Marylanders — 67 percent of western Maryland citizens, 58 percent of central citizens, and 70 percent of Eastern Shore residents — support deer hunting for deer population control.

The decapitated head of an endangered Key deer was found on National Key Deer Refuge in Florida last spring. Deliberate killing of an endangered species carries penalties of up to \$50,000 and one year imprisonment. There are as yet no leads in the case.

Animal rights groups have offered a \$25,000 reward for the arrest and conviction of any U.S. fur farmer on animal cruelty charges. The Dallas, Texas-based Coalition to Abolish the Fur Trade and Last Chance for Animals of Los Angeles put up the bounty.

The 1999 pronghorn antelope harvest in North Dakota was nine percent higher than in 1998. During the 1999 rifle season, 756 hunters averaged 2.1 days afield and took 643 pronghorns, a success rate of 85 percent. Bowhunters had a 20 percent success rate, as 519 hunters took 105 antelope.

Hunting license sales nationwide rebounded significantly in 1999, pushing past the 15 million mark for the first time since 1996.

Due to warm, dry weather, overall elk hunting success in Wyoming — resident and nonresident combined — dropped from 40 percent in 1998 to 36 percent in 1999.

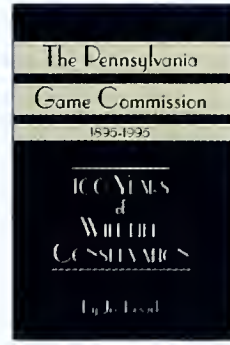
There were 10,703 deer (6,819 antlered and 3,884 antlerless) taken by hunters in New Hampshire in 1999. The harvest was the third highest in the past decade.

Answers: Bobcat, Cottontail, Snowshoe hare, White-tailed deer.

Be Alert, Be Still And Watch.

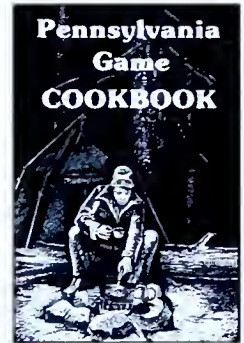
PGC Books

Pennsylvania Game Commission: 1895-1995, by Joe Kosack, covers the agency's first 100 years and includes more than 60 historical photographs.
Price: \$12.26

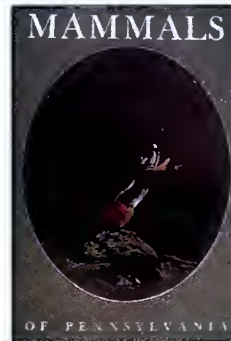
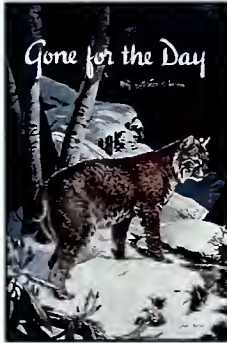


Birds of Pennsylvania, a 214-page hardcover by James and Lillian Wakeley, details birds most commonly found here, plus information on their biology and behavior.
Price: \$12.26

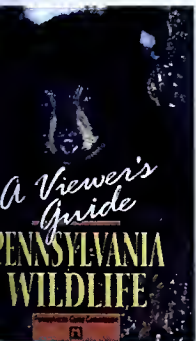
Pennsylvania Game Cookbook is a collection of nearly 200 recipes for popular, and not so popular, game animals.
Price: \$4.71



Gone for the Day is a compilation of Game News columns written and illustrated by famed wildlife artist and naturalist, the late Ned Smith.
Price: \$5.66



Mammals of Pennsylvania, by J. Kenneth Doult et.al. profiles the state's mammals and their roles in the state's history.
Price: \$9.43



Pennsylvania Wildlife: A Viewer's Guide, by Kathy and Hal Korber, features 93 sites noted for their wildlife viewing potential. Directions, maps and photos included.
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Pennsylvania Big Game Records, 1965-1986, lists the state's official trophy deer and bear records, along with many stories of exciting hunts.
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WORKING TOGETHER FOR WILDLIFE

THE WATCHER, by Marie

Girio Brummett, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. New to Pennsylvania, coyotes are cloaked in mystique. Some people despise them for their predatory habits, others admire them for their intelligence, adaptability and tenacity.



2001

The Watcher

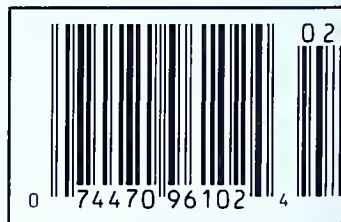
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Acceptance speech, presented during Mrs. Palone's swearing in ceremony in Ligonier, January 17, 2001.

The Future is in Our Hands

Roxane Palone, Commissioner

I'D LIKE TO THANK all of you for attending today, all of you who helped me get into this position, and I want to especially thank my husband Vince, my very best friend in the world, who worked behind the scenes to assist me in getting to the point today of giving this speech, and who loves me just as I am. I also want to thank the sportsmen of Pennsylvania for helping to establish the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

In 1895, Pennsylvania sportsmen were instrumental in the creation of an agency that would serve to protect the last remnants of dwindling wildlife populations. A generation, some of whom fought in the great battles of the Civil War, invited — indeed, begged — the government to come into their lives as a conservation partner. These fiercely independent people knew full well that their only hope to save the tradition they had come to love, hunting, meant giving up what to that point was an unspoken right. Hunting (and trapping) would become a privilege, with regulations, licenses and government interference. But they were willing to make these sacrifices because they saw the “big picture,” the future of hunting in Pennsylvania.

I want to thank the veterans who are here today, especially those who fought on the battlefields of World War II. Not that the other veterans here are less important or less patriotic, but please grant me this indulgence. It was by their own sweat and often their own blood that I can own a gun in America today, hunt and fish, assemble here freely, and pray to God. Those young men had the wisdom and foresight to recognize that what they did on the battlefields would mold our future forever.

Here with us today are many of those who have come to be known as the “greatest generation.” George Lindner, who fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima, and who inspired Admiral Chester Nimitz's accolade that “uncommon valor was a common virtue.” Andy Mazzanti, who served with Carlson's Raiders at Makin, Bougainville and Guadalcanal. George Summersgill, who suffered through 84 days on the island of Okinawa, along with my late father, Bill Smith. My father-in-law, Louis Palone, who hit the beaches of Anzio and southern France with the Third Infantry Division. And Commissioner Shaffer, who served as a P-47 pilot in the Pacific Theatre. No one in this place, or in this country, has not been touched by these veterans' positive influences.

After defeating tyranny they came home. But rather than use their horrific experiences as excuses to fail, they instead realized that no challenges measured up to the demands of war. Solving deer management problems and other issues such as seasons and bag limits are child's play in comparison. For the most part, it was the WWII veterans and their generation who taught my generation to hunt and who passed along the great traditions of life in the outdoors. These are the folks who passed down their favorite Sedgeley sporters and Ainsley Fox shotguns to their children and grandchildren. Will these firearms be sold because of no family interest in their hunting heritage?

Today, although these men have many good years of public service left, the seats of power are changing. The generation after them, my generation, the so-called baby boomers, is having the baton of power passed to us. The mantle of the conservation ethic is now ours, whether we are ready or not. Will our grandchildren understand about hunting camps with an empty chair at the table, an unused coffee cup, a place in the rifle rack with no rifle? It is so important to take time today to thank this generation while they are still with us. Not only for our freedom, but also for all their work and dedication in leaving us with unprecedented wealth, access to advanced education, large tracts of public land, and increasing populations of wildlife such as bobcats, elk, river otters and fishers.

We have hunting opportunities today that those at the turn of the century could only, and *did* only, dream about. Thank you for having the foresight to hire a young untested biologist named Gary Alt who gave us a bear recovery program the envy of the whole country. Thank you for giving us the ability to hunt turkeys in almost any place in the state when many said it could never be done. Thank you for preserving the independent commission system, which is still our best hope for success. Thank you for being wise enough to see the “big picture.”

Now that we have been given such great gifts and blessings, what will be my generation’s legacy to the next generation? Will we forever just be the children of great men and women, stuck forever in our adolescence? Or will we take this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of wealth, peace and education and write the next exciting chapter of Game Commission history? Will we squander the legacy of others by resorting to bickering, name calling and discrimination? Do we have the will and motivation to work together to prove those wrong who will call us the “Me Generation,” caring only about our own gratification and always getting our own way? Will we be wise enough to see the “big picture” for the future of hunting in Pennsylvania? It’s up to us. If we fail, we will have to bear the responsibility.

When I’m an old gray-haired lady listening to the “youngsters” on stage at the Game Commission’s auditorium in Harrisburg, I want them to say that the Game Commission of my time left something to build upon, not something that needs to be rebuilt. As Vern Ross so aptly put it in his first speech at a public meeting of the Game Commission, “We now hold the future of the commission in the palm of our hand. All we need to do is just close our hand around it; thus securing our future as Pennsylvania hunters.” Will we close our hand to cradle one another in a conservation ethic, or will we leave our hand open, spreading our fingers and letting this opportunity slip away — possibly forever?

I have mentioned some of the challenges that faced the last generation; now I want to mention those facing us today. Land use issues are a big concern. Will we



Joe Sterko

With her husband Vince Palone holding a Bible, ROXANE PALONE was sworn in as a Pennsylvania Game Commissioner by District Justice John W. Barron of Johnstown, during a ceremony at the Game Commission’s Southwest Region office in Ligonier.

have enough land for hunting? What should we do regarding the private property rights of those who live in suburban areas that are being overrun with deer? How do we divide the pie among bowhunters, muzzleloader hunters, disabled hunters, junior hunters and rifle hunters? How can we work more closely and collaboratively with the Legislature? How can we listen more effectively to the 90 percent of Pennsylvanians who are not hunters? How can we introduce more youngsters to the joys of hunting rabbits and squirrels?

In order to succeed, I feel there are at least five important things we need to do: listen, listen and listen; develop and implement a long-term strategic plan; practice discipline in our dealings with all stakeholders; seek collaborative solutions, which sometimes means compromising; and, above all, set aside our tribal bickering and present a united front. We are not hyphenated hunters, bow-hunters, rifle-hunters, women hunters, or junior hunters, BUT SIMPLY HUNTERS. It's not that I don't welcome intelligent debate and disagreements: That's the way to listen and learn. But let's disagree quietly, and let's agree with great celebration.

We must remain united to achieve our goals of managing wildlife and preserving our outdoor heritage. The Allied Army of 1944 that stormed Hitler's Atlantic Wall was a diverse army from all cultures, religions and ethnic origins, yet when the time came for battle, all put aside their differences and fought shoulder-to-shoulder to reach a common goal.

In many families today, men are not there to pass on outdoor traditions. If we don't allow women to do it, the job simply won't get done. Ours should be the generation that enthusiastically welcomes women of all ages who are now joining our hunting ranks. Women who will vote with us, adding their hard-earned dollars to game funds. Women who will add new economic and political clout to our causes. Women with willing hands and great minds who will help to perpetuate the greatest part of hunting, which is the participation of family, and the passing down of that tradition.

If I have anything to do with it, mine will not be the first generation to fail both the ones before me and the ones after me. We cannot and will not succumb to naysayers and those who earn a living through the perpetuation of doom and controversy, attaching superlatives to every tiny act. I look out across this room and see many people with the dedication and willingness to achieve many of the things we all care deeply about. I look at all of you and see the "big picture."

I would like to close with a few lines from a poem given to me by my colleague Shelby Jones from Missouri. We were working in Iowa a few years ago, and Shelby read this poem by Edgar Guest that had been printed in his church bulletin. I changed a few pronouns and taped it to my office wall, near my desk, where I could read it often during the course of the nomination process.

*There are thousands to tell me it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesy failure,
There are thousands to point out to me, one by one,
The dangers that wait to assail me.
But just buckle right in with a bit of a grin,
Then take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That cannot be done, and you'll do it.*

Together, we can do it. Thank you all so much for coming and sharing this day with me.



Stonewall Jake

By Ron La Rue

THE FULL MOON was still high in the western sky when I arrived at the property I had selected to hunt the first morning of the 1999 spring gobbler season. Several vocal gobblers greeted me as I gathered my gear from the car, and although none were sounding off from the area where I had planned to set up, it was encouraging to hear active toms in the vicinity. I quickly walked the 200 yards to the cedar thicket I had chosen to hunt.

Night was quickly giving way to the gray dawn as I set out my two jake decoys. Each was located 15 yards from my stand and they were about 20 yards apart. After wrapping my orange band around a nearby tree, I sat back and got ready. I was leaning against two small trees that formed a "V," and just behind the trees was a multiflora

rose thicket. In front of me was an open woods under a canopy of 30-foot cedar trees. Beyond the cedars was a mature forest where I knew turkeys usually roosted.

Shortly after putting on my facemask and gloves and giving a few raspy yelps on my diaphragm call, I noticed a flicker of movement. A turkey had jumped up on a stone wall 60 yards away and was surveying its surroundings. I called softly, and after a few minutes the hen slowly walked towards one of my decoys. She stood off from the decoy for several minutes before cautiously approaching it. Uninterested, she finally ambled off.

I was leaning back, legs outstretched, with my Remington 870

across my lap, calling occasionally with my diaphragm call and my Tuscarora Legend slate call when I heard a turkey behind me. I set aside the slate, but continued yelping and purring with the mouth call. Out of the corner of my eye I could see the bronze chest of a jake. He was walking back and forth behind me, clucking constantly. After several minutes a second jake appeared and both birds serenaded me with their clucking. At times they were within 10 feet, walking back and forth until they finally departed.

Soon a mature hen came out of the overgrown field on my right and alternately fed and preened as she approached the decoys. Standing 10 feet beyond one of the decoys, she surveyed her surroundings for 15 minutes. The next thing I knew she was walking in my direction and was only 15 feet away when she stopped, stared at me and then started clucking softly. I sat perfectly still for what seemed like an eternity until she turned and ambled back towards the decoys. Again she preened and stood silently, looking all around.



I continued to watch the old hen for more than 45 minutes, until I just had to move my legs to restore my circulation. The hen was so close, though, that I couldn't move. I picked up the slate call and sent out a few clucks and purrs while yelping on the diaphragm. Movement

again caught my eyes as another turkey appeared on top of the stone wall in nearly the same spot where I had seen the hen earlier. This bird was a jake, and it had its eyes on my decoys, so I yelped softly and it walked straight in. As it strutted behind the decoys, I raised my gun and my load of No. 5s quickly put down the bird.

While tagging the tom I heard a loud clucking from behind my tree. As I peered through the multiflora rose thicket, I again saw the two jakes walking back and forth, clucking away. I watched them for several minutes before they moved off.

I reflected on what a fantastic spring morning it had been. I had seen several turkeys and had bagged a nice gobbler. A turkey hunter can't ask for much more than that. □

COVER PAINTING BY DOUG PIFER

CLOWNS of the waterways best describe river otters, as they are probably the most playful of Pennsylvania's animals. Otters slide on ice, snow, or muddy banks into creeks, tussle with each other, and play with their food. They require clean water and freedom from too much human disturbance. An adult otter is about three feet long, including a one-foot tail. Otters are shy and active mostly at night, so seeing one is not an everyday occasion. They eat aquatic animals and plants, and are particularly fond of fish — mainly small nongame fish — and crayfish. Found mainly in northeastern Pennsylvania, other spots where you might catch a glimpse of an otter are the Youghiogheny River watershed, Pine and Tionesta creeks.



AS THE TWIN engine plane descended through the clouds I got my first view of the vast, treeless arctic tundra of northern Quebec. A mosaic of brown and white on a landscape of frozen lakes and snowdrifts interspersed with ridges of exposed bedrock. I kept thinking of how this contrasted with the lush green mountains and fields of corn of southcentral Pennsylvania, where I had departed two days earlier. After circling the gravel runway the plane landed at the Povungituk, (POV), an Inuit village of 1,500 people along the Hudson Bay coast, about 700 miles south of the Arctic Circle.

It was May, and I had come north to Nunavik, (Inuit for "the land") the vast northern territory of Canada on the Ungava peninsula of northern Quebec, to help conduct research on nesting Canada geese. This research is the fourth year of a 5-year study to determine factors affecting the nesting success of Atlantic Population (AP) Canada geese. The research is a cooperative effort funded by the Canadian Wildlife Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife

By John P. Dunn
PGC Wildlife Biologist

Service and Atlantic Flyway states, including Pennsylvania. For the next two weeks I would help search for Canada goose nests and record information on clutch size and nesting success. This information, along with the results of a June aerial survey of the breeding population, is used to estimate the size of the fall flight of AP Canada geese. This is important for setting annual hunting regulations.

Aliva Tulagak, owner of the hunting camp where I would be staying, greeted me at the airport. Aliva briefed me on life in Povungituk, pointing out the Inuit Coop store where I could obtain food and other necessities. Then he shuttled me off to the POV hotel to spend the night before flying to the camp the next day. The village was bustling with activity, as Inuit families loaded their sleds and snowmobiles with supplies before heading



Jack Hughes

THE CAMP had four sleeping cabins and a main cabin with kitchen, dining and living areas where we cooked, relaxed and stored equipment.

10-foot high snowdrift against the camp. After being welcomed by the camp inhabitants, I was quickly interrogated for news from the outside world, particularly what hockey team was winning the Stanley Cup finals. The group informed me of the bad news that goose nesting had been delayed due to poor weather. The group

had not located a single nest during the previous eight days.

out on the tundra for a weekend of hunting geese and fishing for arctic char.

The next day I was flown via a twin engine Otter south 45 miles to Aliva's hunting camp. It was raining and the ceiling was no more than 1,000 feet, conditions not safe for flying in Pennsylvania, but up here with the endless flat landscape devoid of trees or towers, the pilot assured me it was safe to do so. After a 20-minute flight we spotted the cabins at the camp along the north shore of the Polemond River, about 10 miles from the Hudson Bay coast. Flying beneath the low ceiling of clouds at an altitude of 200 feet, I could see thousands of frozen ponds and small lakes, only the exposed ridges of glacial rock were free of snow.

At the camp I was met by Canadian Wildlife Service biologist Jack Hughes, wildlife technician Joel Poirier, an Inuit assistant Simiuni Qumaluk, and University of Montreal graduate students Melanie Bedard, Josee Lefebvre and Francis St. Pierre. I was there to relieve Larry Hindman, Maryland DNR waterfowl biologist, who had spent the last 10 days helping to search for goose nests. The plane that had flown me in now picked up Larry for his trip home. As I approached the camp from the makeshift gravel airstrip, I was shocked to see a

had not located a single nest during the previous eight days.

The rest of that day was spent stowing equipment and shoveling snow from around the camp. The camp was well equipped for the caribou hunters and fishermen who would arrive here in August. A pump and generator provided water and electricity. Unfortunately, at this time of year the river was frozen, so we had to rely on melting snow for drinking water and a shower was a luxury we would not have until we returned to POV several weeks later. The generator was used each night to recharge the batteries on the computer and power a satellite phone, our only connection with civilization. Power lights were not needed because it seldom becomes dark enough at this latitude this time of year.

The pantry was well stocked, and the snowdrift outside made a convenient refrigerator. At first we had ample supplies of eggs and fresh and frozen meat, but as the weeks progressed, our diet was increasingly composed of dried, dehydrated and canned foods. We tried to supplement our diet with char and brook trout, but the river was still frozen in most places, and the char had not yet begun to make their run to the bay. A Kool-Aid mixture made from melted snow was a popular drink.

One night Simiuni and I discussed the ways of the Inuit in this arctic wilderness. The hunters and fishermen in the village have formed a cooperative organization

called the Inuit Hunters and Trappers Association. This cooperative provides a year-round salary to the hunters. In return, the hunters provide game and fish to the village elders for distribution to the community. In addition, the cooperative purchases equipment that is shared among the hunters and trappers. The Inuit take Canada geese for their subsistence when the birds first begin to arrive. They are easy to kill as they concentrate on limited open water areas along rivers and the larger lakes, and the hunters can travel to the best hunting areas by snowmobile as the tundra is still frozen. Travel becomes more difficult after the ice breaks up, usually requiring the use of 24-foot freighter canoes.

Hunting is an important family activity in the village. Entire families of men, women and children pack up their snowmobiles and head out to hunt geese and set nets for arctic char, which are abundant in the cold rivers and lakes. In the winter, ring and bearded seals are pursued, and caribou are taken when the herds move through the area.

I was impressed with the reverence the Inuit show for wildlife and nature in general. To them hunting is not a recreation but a religion, an integral part of their subsistence culture. The Inuit are very knowledgeable about the tundra's wildlife and its habitats. Simiuni was able to identify tundra birds much quicker with the naked eye than I could with binoculars. After a long winter, Canada geese are their first source of fresh meat, and there is much excitement when the geese begin to arrive. While food is available at the local grocery store in POV, it is exorbitantly expensive due to the high cost of transportation. Snow geese are highly sought after but are much more difficult to hunt. The firearm of choice is the 22-caliber rifle because ammo is cheap. It is used to take caribou and geese at close ranges; the Inuit are adept at stalking their quarry. (North American natives are exempt from regulated seasons and the regulation prohibiting the use of rifles for mi-

gratory game birds.)

I was surprised by the lack of wildlife diversity on the tundra. Canada geese were the most numerous waterfowl species, followed by snow geese, although they were present on the study area for only a short time. Oldsquaws were the most common duck, and other waterfowl species breeding here include small numbers of tundra swans, mallards, black ducks, pintails, green-winged teal, king eiders, and common and red-breasted mergansers. Despite the many ponds and wetlands, densities of waterfowl species other than geese were low.

Although numbers were small we saw small groups of black-bellied plovers, semi-palmated plovers, golden plovers, ruddy turnstones, red knots, dunlins and red-necked phalaropes, all in their breeding plumages, which we don't get to see in Pennsylvania. For upland birds, we saw snow buntings, Lapland longspurs and ptarmigan, still wearing their winter plumage of white.

The dominant large mammal was the ever-present caribou, or "tuk tuk" in Inuit. Small groups of fewer than 20 animals were sighted every day. These caribou belong to the Leaf River herd, which numbers about 250,000. The main calving grounds are in the Povungituk Mountains, 200 miles north of our camp. The Inuit say there are more caribou now than in past years.

Other mammals I noticed included secretive lemmings in their burrows under the snow, a few of the largest muskrats I have ever seen, and the major goose nest predator, the arctic fox. Arctic foxes were still wearing a mixture of their white winter coats and emerging dark summer coats. The arctic fox population has increased in recent years as Canada goose numbers have recovered. I watched one fox

steal an egg from an unprotected nest and cache it nearby. Often they will return until the entire clutch is lost. Foxes are mostly predators of eggs and young goslings, although sometimes they take an adult defending its nest. Ravens, jaegers, and herring and glaucous gulls are other major predators of nests and goslings.

The next day, May 28, Simiuni and I paired up and began searching for nesting Canada geese. The study area consisted of a 36 sq. km area of tundra, and the group searched on foot, which would take about five days to cover. The weather turned pleasant, with sunny skies and temperatures in the 50s, which began to melt the ice and snow on the smaller ponds. I set out north of camp to the area I was assigned, and walking was difficult due to the deep snowdrifts, numerous small ponds and ridges of glacial rock. Over the next two weeks we would walk an average 12 miles per day in hip waders. Because most geese nest within 10 feet of water, we searched intensively around the perimeters of ponds, lakes and wet meadows.

I discovered my first nest on a hummock of dwarf willow, cranberry and Labrador tea adjacent to a small pond. At first, the goose scratches out a small depression in the vegetation and lines the nest bowl with surrounding materials. As she progresses towards a full clutch of eggs, usually four or five, she lines the nest with down from her breast.

The nest I located contained only one egg, indicating laying had just begun. Simiuni placed a stake marked with fluorescent orange paint and a number near the nest, and I took a reading from the GPS so that we could identify the nest and locate it easily when we returned in several days. If no eggs were added to the nest by then, we would assume the clutch was com-

plete, as geese usually lay one egg per day.

At camp that night we discussed our results and entered the day's data into a portable computer. Locations of each nest were marked on a map of the study area on the wall. Ten nests were located that day, indicating nesting had just begun. Finding nests was difficult at first, because geese were not yet incubating and, therefore, less attentive to the nest site. As incubation goes on, nesting geese are more evident, with one goose on the nest and, usually, the gander standing guard nearby.

The remaining three days of May were spent searching a new part of the study area. Temperatures were pleasant (high 50s) and snowmelt was well underway. The melting snow turned small rivulets into larger streams, sometimes making it difficult for us to get around on the tundra. Ice on the Polemond River began to break up, and on May 29, with warm southerly winds, we saw our first flocks of snow geese flying north to their breeding grounds on Baffin Island. The Canada geese arrive well ahead of the snows, usually late April to early May, to stake out their nesting territories. Nesting really began to pick up, and by May 31 we located more than 100 nests.

I awakened on June 1 to be greeted by a light covering of snow. The temperature was just above freezing and the winds were howling at more than 25 mph. At breakfast Jack decided we would wait for the weather to moderate. We didn't want to flush geese from their nest in these conditions, which could result in chilling the eggs and possibly reducing their ability to hatch. Instead, we spent the day entering data and cleaning up the camp.

For the next seven days we were stuck in camp as the storm continued. High winds, temperatures just above freezing, and blowing and drifting snow made searching for nests out of the question. Cabin fever set in. I read both of the books in English at the camp twice and, unfortunately, the two years of French I had in high school were insufficient for me to read

EACH GOOSE EGG was numbered and measurements and weights were taken. Using these measurements we could estimate the stage of development of the eggs and the expected hatching date.

much of the French material. With the exception of Simiuni and myself, who speak only English, the remainder of the team was bilingual. That evening I used the satellite phone to call back home. My wife, Mona, informed me that the temperature was 91 degrees in Shippensburg. What a difference 1,600 miles due north makes.

On the morning of June 9 another two inches of snow greeted us, but by mid-morning the temperature rose to the upper 40s. This was the first nice day in more than a week, and Jack told us to resume nest searching. Jack, Simiuni and I headed to the north side of the river. We located nine new nests, and many now had full clutches and some had begun incubation.

Canada geese incubate their eggs for about 28 days, and once incubation begins, the crew returns once during mid-incubation and again at hatch to tag the goslings, and to determine gosling survival rates and nest success.

The number of nests located on the study area was 272, compared to around 400 in other years. Nesting was also delayed by 7-10 days, and nesting success was only 29 percent — much lower than in previous years. This decline appeared to be related to the poor weather conditions that occurred during the peak of egg laying and increased predation of nests. Arctic foxes were observed much more than in other years, and the number of nests abandoned was three to four times greater.

Unlike Pennsylvania's resident Canada geese, AP geese must contend with the rigors of nesting in the arctic and its unpredictable weather. Because of the poor production of goslings from these important breeding areas in northern Quebec, the At-



Jack Hughes

lantic Flyway Council and USFWS elected not to expand hunting opportunities on AP geese for the 2000-01 hunting season.

After returning from a day of nest searching, Jack informed me that the Canadian Coast Guard helicopter would arrive that evening to take me back to POV. The helicopter had been scheduled to arrive several days earlier, but bad weather and a search and rescue operation had delayed its arrival. I packed my gear and said my good-byes to my fellow camp members. Most of them stayed at the camp until late June, when all the goslings had hatched and had been tagged. These goslings were then recaptured, along with molting adults in the annual banding operation in late July.

The next day as my flight left POV for Montreal and then on to Harrisburg, I once again viewed this vast arctic wilderness stretching as far as the eye could see without much impact by man. In a few months these geese would be following my route south to Pennsylvania and the Chesapeake, only to return north again the following spring as they have done for thousands of years. I left with a better understanding of the people and wildlife of this vast northern goose factory the Inuit call Nunavik. □

Grandpa's Guns

By David W. Evans

MY GRANDFATHER lived from the horse and buggy days to space flights. With virtually no formal education, he became a master carpenter and bricklayer. Not uncommon in his time, he lived self-sufficiently, day to day, with little planning for the future. As a result, he left few material things behind. He did leave his guns, though.

When Grandpa passed away, I didn't live nearby and thought that my father had given away or sold all of Grandpa's possessions. This was something that Dad and I never discussed. I didn't feel I had a right to question his actions, and I didn't want to generate remorseful feelings over past events. So, I was completely unaware when, while on a weekend visit to my dad's nearly 20 years later, he said, "I have some things of your grandfather's that should be yours."

I followed him into the dimly lit den. With his back to me, he unlocked and opened the gun cabinet door, then carefully took something out. "Remember this?" he asked, turning as he opened the action and handed me a gun.

Gazing down at the firearm in my hands, I was absolutely stunned. It was the first shotgun I had ever used, a single-shot 20-gauge my father also had begun hunting with as a youngster. Grandpa had carried it in his younger days, too. A chill swept through me. I felt like I was seeing a dear long lost friend for the first time in years. I managed to choke out a strained, "Oh, Dad."

Standing in the den, I marveled at how light the gun now felt in my hands. I remembered it had seemed so heavy to me as a boy. Now realizing how small I must have been, I felt humbled. Stepping over to the lamp, I turned the gun in my hands and noticed the IVER & JOHNSON'S ARMS AND CYCLE WORKS, FITCHBURG, MASS. USA., CHAMPION stamped into the browned metal. The familiar old nicks in the forearm and stock predated my use and were testament to decades of field use. The butt plate, featuring an owl's face, had a broken tip. I recalled that,



underneath it, Grandpa's initials "RE" were carved into the stock's butt.

Long dormant memories of youthful, carefree times in the woods and fields floated through my mind. Some included my dad, grandfather, dogs, misty mornings, sun dappled afternoons and the musky fragrance of fallen leaves. Others were solitary moments known only to me.

I recalled that outfitting me for my first season was a subdued affair. With money being scarce, most of my gear was hand-me-downs. No safety color was required back then. I wore a red cap with fur-lined earflaps, an old brown canvas vest and an old greasy pair of Grandpa's canvas pants. They were jodhpur style — baggy thighed, tight lower legged and laced along the sides below the knee. Although they were too big, I wore them two seasons, but I was not entirely upset when Dad put them in the washer and they fell apart. I was ecstatic when Grandpa handed me the old 20 and said, "You can reach up into the treetops for squirrels with this." I felt like he was, in his way, giving recognition to me that I was on the threshold of becoming a young man.

Ironically, I don't think I ever shot at a squirrel with that firearm, nor did I actually shoot much of anything my first season.

Now, standing in Dad's den with the old 20 cradled in my arms, I vividly recalled using it to bag my first bunny. We were hunting Ford Hill overlooking the Monongahela River. While Dad and old Duke fought through briars below me, I eased along a fenceline. From near my feet the cottontail bolted and ran straight uphill through the patchy weeds. In the process of mounting the gun, I again had trouble thumbing back the hammer as the bunny raced farther away. When I finally got off the shot, the rabbit tumbled. I was so excited about finally connecting that I couldn't speak. Dad, not one to offer compliments or congratulations, was thrilled. He squeezed my shoulder and patted my

back as he told me what a good shot I'd made. Not wanting to disappoint him, I never told him that I owed the success to being delayed by hammer difficulty. Had I shot earlier, I know I would have missed.

I carried the single-shot for several seasons and became effective with it, but I soon wanted the assurance and versatility that a pump action offered. Dad replaced the single with a 20-gauge pump with a modified choke, but my hits dropped dramatically until he got the stock length shortened for me.

"Take this one, too," Dad said as he turned back to the cabinet in the den. I gently snapped the single-shot closed and carefully laid it on the sofa. Then I took Grandpa's Winchester Model 12 slide action 16-gauge into my hands. As a youngster I was completely enamored with Grandpa's 16. He was the only one I knew who shot a 16. My friends and their fathers used 12-gauge side-by-sides. My dad and I were strictly 20-gauge shooters — although I had always wanted a 16-gauge pump. With the emergence of 20-gauge 3-inch shells, 16-gauges faded in popularity, but Grandpa remained faithful. Bringing it to my shoulder, I could understand why Grandpa had never changed. The 16-gauge was light as a feather.

I remembered one particular opening day at my great uncle's farm near Ruffs Dale. Dad, Grandpa and his beagle, Fanny, and I were hunting the woods. We had a great morning, spotting a gray fox, a covey of quail and a magnificent 8-point buck. Fanny brought a couple bunnies full circle and pheasants were gliding over the treetops after being flushed by hunters in adjoining cornfields. We were in line abreast, at intervals, with Grandpa in the middle. Fanny wormed her way into a blowdown and a

cockbird exploded from the opposite side in front of Grandpa.

"Shoot, Dave!" he hollered. Using the old 20-gauge single, I cleanly missed. Grandpa followed up with his 16 and the bird's wings folded. The cockbird arched downward and dropped into the leaves like a missed football.

As we gathered around the bird, Grandpa, probably sensing my feelings, told Dad that he thought I had hit it first. I rejected the idea and slipped the bird into Grandpa's game pouch. He ejected the

spent shell and reloaded his 16. As we moved to get back into formation, I scooped up the empty waxed cardboard shell and sniffed the open end. I loved the smell of

spent powder. I pocketed the green shell, and on the way home sat in the back seat of our Nomad wagon, petting exhausted Fanny while I admired the 16-gauge shotshell. I decided that one day I would have a 16-gauge pump of my own.

In the den I looked up at Grandpa's 16-gauge pump and asked, "Dad, are you sure?"

"I'm sure. They'll be yours someday, anyhow. But this one I want to keep." Then he lifted Grandpa's old single-shot .22 carbine from the cabinet. I placed the 16 on the sofa next to the 20 and wrapped my fingers around the .22. It seemed to weigh as much as the 16- and 20-gauges combined. I vaguely remembered this gun. Grandpa simply did not have reason to use it often, and when he did, I wasn't around. But I did see him sitting in his kitchen once cleaning it.

The rifle is an unforgettable gem.

Again, I moved near the lamp to get a better look. The dark brown bull barrel was round but became octagonal at the forearm. The rifle had a black walnut schnable forend and crescent buttstock. Stamped into the barrel were the words J. STEVENS A. & T. CO., CHICOPEE FALLS, MASS. U.S.A., PAT. APR. 17 '94, .22 LR. I shouldered the heavy lever action, falling block single-shot rifle and sighted along the barrel. The front blade appeared to automatically settle into the buckhorn rear sight and did not waiver from an imaginary target on the far wall.



"Your grandfather hunted with it when he was a kid. Then I used it when I first started shooting. It's real accurate. I use it on groundhogs that get

into the garden. That's why

I want to keep it. Someday when I'm gone it'll be yours," Dad said.

Today all of Grandpa's and Dad's guns are in my safe, including a .35 Remington pump and a Roberts double-barrel muzzleloading percussion shotgun with extensive engraving. I use the single-shot 20-gauge to shoot clay birds at my local sportsman's club. I fondly carry the 16-gauge pump for dove, turkey, and for deer hunting in special regulations areas. The hefty single-shot .22, now that my son and I have used it on paper targets, has been fired in three different centuries by four generations of my family. I plan to try it on squirrels. Dad was right — it's very accurate.

The nostalgia that I get from Grandpa's guns is something that perhaps only a hunter or shooter could appreciate. Regardless, one day my children will consider themselves fortunate to grow up with the same hunting heritage. □

*I have got you out here in the great open spaces
where cats are cats. — Don Marquis*

Night of the Cougar

By William Wasserman

Wyoming County WCO

DEPUTY JOE WENZEL (now North-east Region Wildlife Education Specialist) and I were on night patrol for poachers, and when we got the radio call about a cougar I asked dispatch to repeat the message, just to be certain we heard it right.

"We have a complaint that a 'cougarr' just killed a goat in Noxen," the voice crackled back, purposely drawing out the word cougar.

Joe and I looked at each other in disbelief. "Nah, can't be," I said gazing out the window of my Bronco.

"No way," agreed Joe.

As we eased slowly down the long, narrow driveway toward the complainant's house, a man and his wife greeted us. "Glad you could come," the man said gravely.

I introduced Joe, then myself. "What makes you think a cougar killed your goat?" I asked.

"We've been hearing them scream for weeks," the man declared. "It's the most blood-curdling sound I ever heard."

"Sure it's not a bobcat?"

"My brother saw a cougar just yesterday; it was a huge yellow cat with a long tail. Oh, they're in the area all right," he assured us grimly.

"Where is the goat?" I asked.

"Up there," the man pointed into the woods. "I'll follow you."

Forty yards from the house Deputy Wenzel happened to turn and discovered with horror that the man had a .44 Mag-

num absently pointed at my back as we picked our way through the woods. "Mister, do you have a holster for that cannon?" he barked.

"Yes but — "

"Then you better put it in there before somebody gets killed!"

I looked at Joe and shook my head in wonder as we forged ahead. Until that moment, we didn't know the man had been armed.

Then before us, a large goat lay dead. Its chain wrenched taut. Its neck torn and broken. The goat had been partially gutted, and steam curled from its protruding entrails. Although any predator might attack its prey by the neck, it is a common trait of large cats. I trained my flashlight on the ground looking for tracks or scat. There was nothing.

Suddenly a thick, penetrating groan rumbled toward us. We froze. Again it came, perhaps 20 yards off. "I'm going out there," I said. "I want to see what that is."

"Excuse me," said the goat's owner, "but I think I'll retreat now."

"Good idea," I muttered over my shoulder.

I only walked a few yards when I heard a dead branch snap followed by brush scraping along the body of a large animal as it maneuvered to my right. The growling started again, this time followed by a series of deep, gut-

tural huffs.

I turned back. "That's no bobcat," I said.

Joe's eyes, hawk-like, cut toward the sound. He nodded in agreement.

"That thing really wants the goat," I said. "We're staying here until it comes for it. Go get the shotgun out of my Bronco."

As I stood alone by the steaming goat, the creature began to approach. It moved heavily through the darkness. It was close now; I could hear the steady cadence of its panting. I drew my .357 revolver with the grim understanding that it wouldn't be enough to stop a truly large animal unless my aim was dead on — unlikely, I admitted to myself, under the circumstances. "Come on Joe," I whispered uneasily.

I began contemplating the possibility that this was indeed a big cat — bigger than a cougar, judging from the sounds it made. Over the years, I had known people who owned African lions. Sometimes they got loose. Perhaps this was one. It would explain the "cougar" sighting and the screaming everyone was ranting about. And I stood between it and dinner. Or maybe not, I thought, Maybe I was dinner — the goat merely an appetizer.

Within minutes Joe returned and handed me the shotgun. He was instructed to turn on his flashlight at my command. Cougars and lions are known to attack humans, and one so close to people's homes might have to be destroyed. I chambered a round and waited.

We expected the creature to continue its approach from the front, but it skirted to our rear, putting us between itself and the goat. We could hear it stalking us. I shouldered the shotgun and eased the tip of my finger against its safety.

For three long minutes nothing stirred. It was studying us. Waiting to

This is one of 52 accounts recently published in a new book, *The Best of 'It's a Wild Life'* by WCO Bill Wasserman. Many *Game News* readers no doubt remember the "Looking Back" column Bill wrote for *Game News* in 1993, about his experiences as a WCO in Montgomery and Wyoming counties. A prolific writer, Bill has also been writing a column, "It's a Wild Life" for his local newspaper, *The New Age-Examiner*.

Featured in this 8 1/2 x 11 hardcover volume are 52 of some of Bill's best columns. Complementing Bill's accounts are stunning full color photographs by John Wasserman (Bill's twin brother and fellow WCO) and Ray Massacesi.

The Best of 'It's a Wild Life' can be ordered from The New Age-Examiner, P.O. Box 59, Tunkhannock, PA 18657 (570/836-2123). Visa and MasterCard accepted. The price is \$26.50, including state sales tax; add \$2.75 for shipping.

make its move. And not knowing where it lay made me uneasy. I envisioned it crouched, tail twitching; wide-eyed; ready to pounce. "Put the light on and sweep it," I called.

Pushing the safety button off I followed Joe's light with the muzzle of my shotgun. Joe saw it first. "It's a bear!"

I had been so prepared to see a big cat that at first I was disappointed. I pointed the muzzle skyward. "Get going!" I yelled.

The bear ambled off to my left, still close, and stared back at me. "Go on!" I hollered stepping toward it. "Scram!" It was about 20 yards away and looked to weigh over 300 pounds.

But the bear wanted the goat and apparently wasn't leaving without it. I brought the shotgun to my shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The 12-gauge roared into the night like a cannon, and the bear, frightened but unharmed, disappeared deep into the forest in a lumbering stride.

Joe and I both hoped it went someplace far away. Someplace where there are no goats to kill . . . or game wardens to terrorize. □

A Special Dad

By Jerry Bush

TURNING 12 in 1967, I swelled with excitement each time I thought about the prospects of going hunting with my dad. He had let me tag along on several occasions the previous year, but now I would be a participant.

As most 12-year-old boys, however, my attention span was about as long as the current activity and, therefore, my dreams of hunting were temporarily blocked by visions of gridiron stardom. I was engrossed in the task at hand, running the perfect route and scoring the winning touchdown.

For the moment I would find glory as the wide receiver in a neighborhood football game. Kenny shouted out the cadence, "hut 1, hut 2, hike." I sprinted as fast as my lanky legs would allow, toward the imaginary endzone that would signal my superstar status. Kenny launched the football, and as it spiraled steadily to

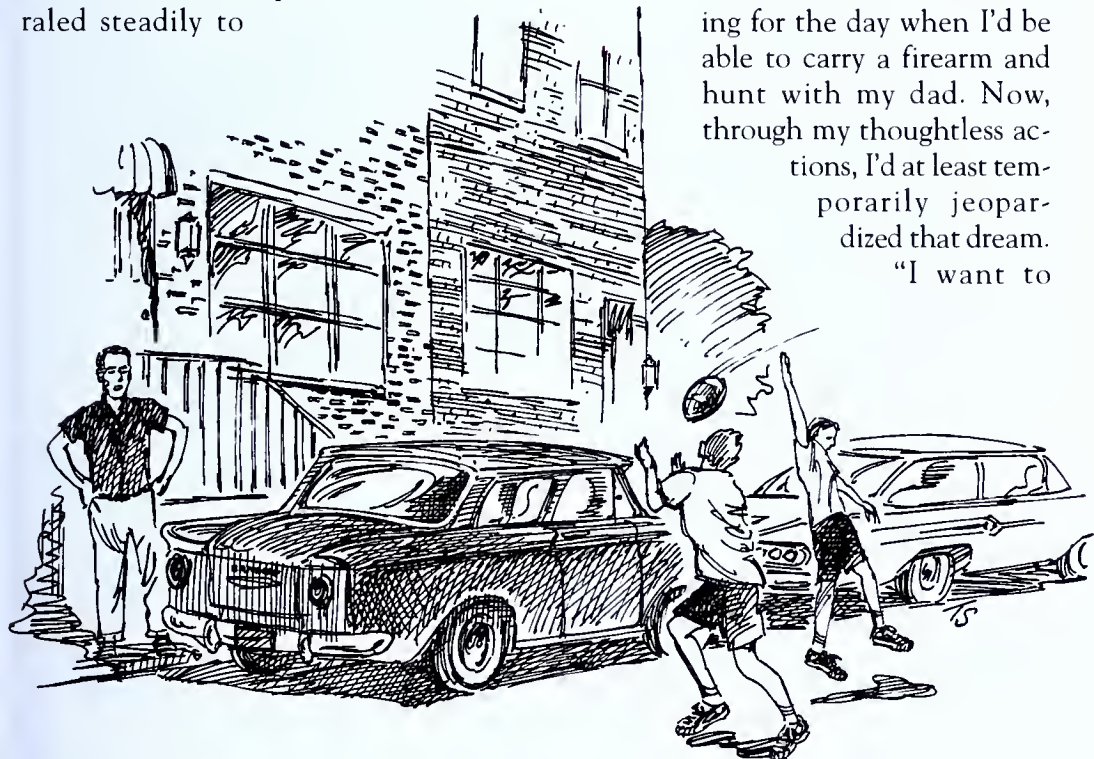
my waiting hands, a familiar voice echoed through my ears. "Jerry, come here," my dad's voice interrupted. With my concentration broken, the ball glanced out of my fingers and fell to the ground. Out of frustration I turned and yelled, "What? Can't it wait? You made me drop the ball."

I glanced my father's way and noticed he looked rather disturbed as he uttered, "Never mind" and walked back into our home. My conscience kicked in, so I told Kenny and the other guys that I'd better go.

As I approached the tiny kitchen in our apartment, my eyes met Dad's and he quipped, "I guess you don't want to go with me to get your hunting license?"

I felt guilty and incredibly sad, because I had been living for the day when I'd be able to carry a firearm and hunt with my dad. Now, through my thoughtless actions, I'd at least temporarily jeopardized that dream.

"I want to



go, Dad," I quickly reassured him. It was too late.

Determined to teach me a lesson about respect, he countered with, "Not if you think you can yell at me like that, boy."

I had blown my opportunity. Perhaps I was trying to prove my maturity as I fought back the tears, but I'm certain my facial expression disclosed my true disappointment. I then apologized once again, turned, and walked back across the street to salvage what was left of the football game. Somehow, the game had lost its luster.

Suddenly, when I least expected it, Dad called to me again. "Son, we'd better get going if we're going to get that license."

He'd given me time to absorb the lesson, then forgave me. I raced across the street, looked Dad in the eye with a grin from ear to ear, then waved goodbye to my friends as I leaped into the car.

Dad insisted we travel to the city to purchase the hunting license. I was somewhat puzzled, because Dad had always purchased his hunting li-

cense at the hardware store in our tiny hometown. But if Dad would have said we were going to China to buy our licenses, I was going along. At that moment, receiving my hunting license outweighed every other accomplishment of my young life. Many years would pass before I would understand the full significance of this outing. In fact, I now realize the experiences of that day were as important as any hunt I'd ever share with Dad — and we were destined to share some great adventures.

My father parked the red Rambler in front of the county courthouse, and after entering the building we got directions to the county treasurer's office. My father asked the clerk for a hunting license application, and as she laid it on the counter he proudly stated, "We need one for my son; this is going to be his first year."

As I look back on that statement, I'm aware of how proud he was of me, and I remember how important he made me feel. I now realize those were also statements of his commitment. This took place before hunter safety courses were required, and my father was say-



Eleven-year-old youngsters who have successfully completed a required Hunter-Trapper Education Course may purchase a Junior License if they will be 12 years old by December 31 of the license year. They may not lawfully hunt prior to their 12th birthday. Persons 12 and 13 must be accompanied by an adult member of the family (at least 18), or by an adult serving in place of a parent. Persons 14 and 15 must be accompanied by an adult 18 years of age or older. Adults must be close enough that verbal guidance can be easily understood. Sixteen-year-olds may hunt alone. To find a Hunter-Trapper Education Course in your area refer to the Game Commission's Website at www.pgc.state.pa.us and click on County Information.

bragging rights for the remainder of the afternoon. I returned to the house for dinner, and just when I believed things couldn't get any better, my mother and father announced that they were taking me to a store that evening to buy a hunting coat. I pleaded for a plaid Woolrich coat like Dad's, but he convinced me it would be too heavy for my young frame, especially when it was wet. Actually, it was probably too expensive, but his explanation satisfied my

ing he would be responsible for my actions. He would teach me to hunt safely and ethically. He would be the person accountable for my actions with a firearm, and I understood that if I wanted to hunt with my dad, safety was of the utmost importance.

As we exited the courthouse with my important documents in hand, Dad had another surprise for me. He asked if I'd like to go for lunch. To appreciate this gesture, you must realize that money was scarce in those days. Youngsters today can't appreciate what a big deal it was to eat out. I'm constantly reminding my children that there truly was a day when McDonalds weren't located on every corner. I felt blessed as my father and I proceeded to a small diner called the "New York Lunch." Why it had that name I'll never know.

I remember carrying my hunting rules and regulations booklet into the diner with me. I was determined to read every detail to my dad. Occasionally, as I read over the regulations, my "hero" would interrupt me just long enough to comment on one of the rules he felt most significant, and then he'd smile and remind me to eat my meal. I felt like a trophy that day, and my father was proudly displaying me.

When I got home I couldn't wait to tell Kenny and my other friends. I held all the

youthful expectations. We decided to purchase a standard hunting parka three sizes too large, one that would take me a good while to grow into. It would be functional, providing warmth and large storage pockets, and it would serve as my uniform, boldly displaying my allegiance to the fraternity of hunters.

I wish I had saved something from that day, especially my first hunting license. I don't remember my backtag number, and I barely remember signing the paperwork Dad helped me fill out. My first hunting parka was discarded many years ago, yet I'll never forget that Saturday in September 1967. The value of that day increases as I grow older and share experiences with my children. Like many men back then, Dad often worked two jobs, and as a current father of three, only now do I fully appreciate his efforts.

In the last few years Pop was ill and unable to join me on hunts and he recently passed away. Nonetheless, I find myself looking forward to the approaching deer season, knowing he'll be standing in the pine trees next to me, not just this year, but all my years to come. "Thanks, Dad." □

B I G



ROBERT DUFF JR., Blairsville, with his 10-point taken in Westmoreland County in 1999.



RICK BEATTY, McKean, and his daughter, **MICHELLE**, above, show off the big 11-point he got in Erie County. **NANCY BELL**, Shippensburg, below, with her first buck — an 8-point — taken in Clarion County.



Pennsylvania is home to some outstanding whitetails, as these photos show, and to honor trophies like these the Game Commission will be conducting measuring sessions around the state this spring. Details on the dates, times and locations are on page 41. The top deer in typical and nontypical archery, typical and nontypical firearm, and black bear categories will be showcased at the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association fall conference in DuBois in September.



PAT TEMPLE, Tarentum, stayed in Allegheny County to take this 8-point with a 21-inch spread.

BUCKS



Father and son **DON and SCOTT MICHAEL**, Yorkana, took their 10-point bucks in Cameron County.



CHUCK KERN, Pittsburgh, got this 12-point with a 20-inch spread in Clarion County.

PEGGY SMITH, Sugar Run, right, with her first buck — a 10-point — in 25 years of hunting. **BRIAN DERSTINE**, Sellersville, below, with his 13-point buck taken with a bow in Bucks County. **CATHY CAMPBELL LEFF**, York Haven, below right, got her trophy in York County.



Pathfinder

Penns Woods Sketchbook by Bob Sopchick

JEFF READS THE same sentence three times but none of it registers, and he lets the hunting magazine flop onto his chest. He stares at the ceiling, conjuring in the swirls of cracked plaster the image of a deer in a snowstorm, then a scenario where he drives the big buck to his grandfather waiting on stand, who shoots the legendary deer and they drag it into camp together. He lies there until the daydream passes and his grandfather's voice fades, then sits up, swinging his left leg then the right over the side of the bed.

Jeff's eyes sweep the photos and newspaper clippings tacked to his bulletin board. "Jeff Logan Tourney MVP." Another reads, "Logan Perfect! Fairview Ace Sweetens No-hitter with Homer." A team picture of the players holding a banner, "Fairview High School 1949 District II Champs." Scattered among the news clippings are old hunting licenses, hand drawn maps, and his favorite photo, a posed snapshot of him and his grandfather at deer camp dragging in their bucks. His grandfather passed away several weeks after the picture was taken.

From the top slot of a gunrack Jeff removes his grandfather's deer rifle, a Model 99G .250 Savage. He checks the action, snaps it to his shoulder, and plasters the bead on the chest of a buck leaping from a calendar. He wipes an oily rag over the grayed receiver and barrel and puts the gun back.

He pulls on a baseball glove and pounds his fist hard into the greasy pocket, then, as he did every night, props two pillows against the back of a stuffed chair and stands across the room as if on a pitching mound. He winds up and fires a fastball into the pillow with a loud *whump!* The ball rolls off the pillow and across the carpet, and he scoops it up with his glove. He throws pitch after pitch in the cadence of a game until the pillows are warped deeply like a catcher's mitt and sweat beads above his lip.

From the second rung on the gunrack he takes a baseball bat and rotates the bat from his shoulder several times, staring through the bedroom window at their backyard fence. He waits for the right pitch and swings ferociously, loses his balance, the momentum of his swing spinning him around, and he crashes against a wardrobe and clumps loudly to the floor.

Seconds later his father bursts in and runs over to him, "Hey, Jeff, you okay? Here, let me help you up."

Jeff looks away. "I can get up myself. I just slipped, that's all."

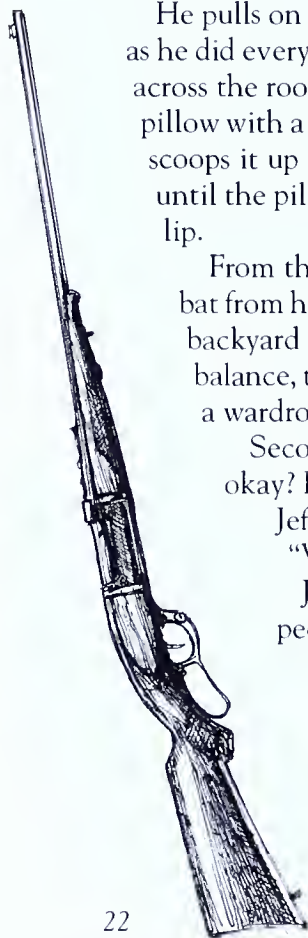
"Well, be careful. I'll see you at breakfast then."

Jeff hears his father whispering to his mother in the hallway, and she peeks in.

"Goodnight, Ma," he said, waving her off.

He missed his grandfather more than ever. He was the one person who wouldn't treat him differently now — not like everyone else did since the accident.

IT HAPPENED TEN months ago, right after their sophomore



year. He and Skip, his best friend and the team's shortstop, were hiking by Indian Rock, a towering escarpment in the wooded gap beyond town. Suddenly Skip shouted, "Race you to the top!"

They must have climbed the rocks a thousand times when they were younger, the reward a cold drink from the spring at the top that bubbled with the sweetest water in the world. Jeff remembered his route, even though he hadn't climbed it for several years. He had grown tall since then, and his ascent was out of sync, but Skip went straight up quick as a red squirrel up a pine.

Near the top Jeff undershot a handhold when the tip of his sneaker slipped from a crack, and he began to slide, nails raking desperately, then fell away, feet first. He would have landed safely on the switchback path that traversed the escarpment 12 feet below, but his right heel caught the tip of an old fallen pine branch, left leaning like a spear from another time, and it drove up through the heel of his sneaker, corkscrewed up through his leg, splintering bones, flaying flesh, exploding his knee.

He opened his eyes days later to undulating fields of snow stretching far before him, but as his eyes focused he saw that the fields were rumpled bed sheets and that he was in a hospital room, his parents at bedside. Then he remembered, and saw the deep swale in the sheets where his right leg used to be, and his life was changed forever.

He returned to school that fall, but everything was different. Pity was like a contagion that spread among his teachers and friends and family. Some people even talked louder and slower to him, as if he had become deaf, too. He became bitter and withdrawn, spending most of his free time in his room. He skipped hunting season, and didn't go to deer camp with his father. His friends stopped coming around. Now in the spring of his junior year, he couldn't wait for school to be over, and even thought of dropping out.



HIS BEDROOM IS stuffy, and Jeff opens the window. Fickle March breezes buffet warm then cool — mercurial as his own emotions. Lightning flashes and thunder rolls up the valley, rumbling along with the 10 o'clock express. A wall of hail hits the side of the clapboard house, icy pellets sting his outstretched arms. He scoops a double handful of hail from the sill, crunches some in his mouth, rubs the rest on the back of his neck. The air is charged and confused and Jeff becomes restless, his mind paces the room. He is tired of the endless days of dreary rain, the too familiar sounds of the slumbering house, of reading about things he could never do again. He unstraps his wooden leg and hangs it in the gunrack and lays in bed, hoping a new dream would find him.

The window he had left open rattles loudly from the 4 a.m. outbound, and Jeff gets up to shut it. Garlands of stars are draped across the dome of the valley — a nice day lay ahead. He opens a drawer and takes out the new riflescope that his grandfather had intended to mount on the Savage. When he looks at the stars through the scope they stop twinkling, and he sees that some are subtle shades of yellow and pink. Legions of peepers trill in the lowlands, beckoning.

He straps on the leg and gets dressed, then breaks the rifle down and slides it into a

leg-o'-mutton case. He packs a rucksack with a canteen, a flashlight, a knife and the scope. From the bottom notch of the gunrack he takes his walking stick, then goes downstairs.

His parents come into the kitchen as he packs a lunch. "I'm going to the gunsmith down in Antrim. I want to get the scope mounted on the Savage."

"Let's have some breakfast first and I'll take you, said his father. Petry's shop won't be open for a couple of hours yet."

"I'm gonna walk. I already have my stuff packed."

"But that's a good seven miles one way. You sure?"

"I'm sure," he said, slinging the case over his shoulder. I'll probably be back late."

"He'll probably be back late" repeats his mother.

They watch him walk across the moonlit yard and slip into the woods.

HE SETS OUT on a boyhood path through an elderberry patch, then takes a tram road that snakes across a laurel flat. He finds the old cowpath that connects to a dirt lane that runs down the hill. He crosses the highway and several train tracks, then slides down an embankment to the broad, smooth path that follows the river.

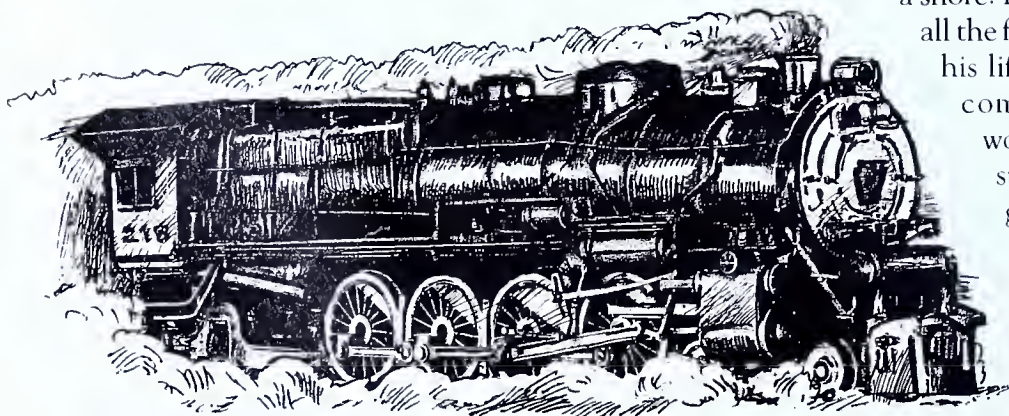
The swollen river hisses along in a straight stretch past a huge scrapyard where silent steam locomotives await the torch, being replaced by the new diesel engines. He passes several farms, then the river curves gently to the west, flowing into the the steep forested gorge. The valley lay before him, illuminated by an enormous yellow moon that shows the contour of the mountains, the muscular shoulders of earth. His heart leaps with the aching beauty of it and his sudden insignificance, and although he cannot run, his spirit races along with the river.

He walks steadily, as if in a dream, until the sky grays. Gauzy mists hang in the crowns of mottled sycamores and swirl above drowned islands. The river path is flooded ahead, and he crosses the swampy slough to his right by stepping on grassy hummocks with his good leg and into the water with the other. A great blue heron rises up, and he watches it fly slowly across the river and set down again.

He had to climb the steep, slippery embankment to get to the railbed. He tries a deer trail, but it is too slick, then finds another route, pulling himself up on grapevines, but they have too much slack. Finally, he crawls up a rocky gully. He slithers under the roots of a tilted sycamore and comes up onto the railbed on his elbows, pushing along with his good leg. Muddy and tired, he crosses the tracks and sits on the side of an old wooden mine car worn smooth and stained from generations of passing foxes and stray dogs. The valley awakes while he eats a sandwich.

A lone locomotive chugs by, the engineer blows the whistle. Jeff liked trains, the familiar *click, clack, click, clack* as comforting as breaking waves to those who live along

a shore. He thought how all the favorite things of his life were made of combinations of wood, leather and steel; the big engines and ties and rails, his grandfather's rifle, the hiking staff and



his bat and glove and ball, and now this artificial leg, that might serve well.

He continues on, the sun warming his back. He stops at a deep ravine that clefs the mountain, and watches a white torrent rush through a culvert. Its roar is the union of all wild voices from far in the uplands, the echoes of autumn's frenzy trapped in ice, buried under snow, rushing headlong now to the sea.

Just beyond, he finds a big shed antler with four points, but the tallest tine is broken. Farther down the tracks he finds the other, an exact match, but with all its points. He straps the antlers onto his rucksack and they click and rattle as he walks. He proceeds across the iron bridge into Antrim like some wild and filthy pilgrim come down from a hard winter in the mountains.

THE AROMATIC BLEND of oils and solvents and lampblack smoke fills the gunsmith's shop. Metal shavings and wood chips grind under his boots. Petry, the smith, drills and taps the receiver and mounts the scope, then tells him to shoulder the rifle.

"This stock is way too short and low for you," he says. "It's an older model. You ought to get a new one made. Look there, look at all those nice walnut blanks I got."

"I like to work with wood," said Jeff. "I made a gunrack in woodshop."

"Tell you what, if you come down on Saturdays, I could show you. You can make it yourself. Maybe help me out a bit in trade."

"It's a deal," said Jeff. "I'll leave the gun here. I can help some today, if you want."

"Good. Then we'll call it even for the scope mounting. Grab a broom."

Jeff leaves the shop at dusk, and decides to take the other side of the river back. He walks near a solitary engine idling at the edge of the village and the engineer yells down, "Hey buddy, if you need a lift, climb aboard."

Jeff climbs up the metal rungs with much difficulty.

"You're that fella I saw this morning," said the engineer. "Boy, those sure are nice antlers. I saw a big buck like that cross the tracks the first day of deer season. He came out of a ravine and swam out to a little island on the river. He's a smart one, all right. That rack would be perfect if that point wasn't broke."

"I was perfect once," said Jeff, then laughed to himself. "I mean, I pitched a perfect game, a no-hitter, before I hung up my glove."

"Looks like you might have a couple good innings still in you," said the engineer.

"Maybe," said Jeff.

Just before the big bend the engineer slows the locomotive to a crawl and Jeff hops off, but doesn't fall as he thought he would. It takes him a long time to cross the railroad bridge on the single board catwalk, one boot in front of the other, the rabid river below frothing and leaping against the trestles.

ALMOST HOME, he stops to rest at the base of Indian Rock, hot and thirsty, his canteen empty. He leans forward against the rock, palms and cheek pressed against the cool sandstone. He feels the earth pulsing through the ancient rock, then realizes it is his own heart pushing back against his chest.

Jeff considers climbing the rocks, confident he could, but takes the switchback path up instead. On top he drinks from the cold spring until his jaw hurts, then sits on the edge of an outcropping, legs dangling, looking up through the moonlit valley. In the distance the angry river is a silver ribbon winding peacefully through the indigo hills.

He comes down through the woods, sees the porchlight, his parents in the kitchen drinking coffee. He is exhausted, but would rest up tomorrow — baseball practice started after school Monday and he wanted to be ready.



FIELD NOTES



Couldn't Say

CHESTER — My brother Jeff was deer hunting in Huntingdon County when he heard a terrific noise behind him. Turning, he noticed a large black bear sliding down the mountain on its backside, with all four feet out in front trying to stop. When the bear finally did stop, it jumped up, saw Jeff, then ran off. Jeff says he's not sure if the bear ran because it was startled or just embarrassed.

— WCO KEITH W. MULLIN, OXFORD



Hazardous to His Health

Shorty Scrampton was in his treestand during archery season when he decided to put in a fresh pinch of snuff. He was about to put the can of snuff back in his pocket when he noticed a buck heading his way, so he clenched the can between his teeth and drew his bow. When he released the arrow he heard a strange sound and felt a weird sensation, as the string caught the can, ripping it and his dentures out. Needless to say, the arrow missed its mark, and Shorty spent the next half hour trailing nothing more than his false teeth.

— COMMISSIONER SAMUEL J. DUNKLE, DUNCANSVILLE

Another Good Lesson

MCKEAN — I ran into a young boy and his father squirrel hunting, and the youngster proudly produced his new HTE card and said that he had scored 100 percent on his test. Impressed, I told him I would do a complete field check, so he could tell his instructors that he'd been officially checked by a WCO. The boy's license checked out, and he had plenty of fluorescent orange, but then I discovered that his shotgun was not plugged. The boy was shocked, and when I asked him what I should do, he said I should arrest him. The father explained that his son's grandfather had used the gun to hunt deer in New York, and that he had never thought to check it when they borrowed it. I wrote out a warning and explained to the youngster the importance of being familiar with any gun he might use.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK, PORT ALLEGHENY

Big Harvest

HUNTINGDON — I checked quite a few hunters who tagged both a buck and an antlerless deer on the last day of buck season.

— WCO PHILIP J. LUKISH, ALEXANDRIA

Commendable

SUSQUEHANNA — Neighboring WCO Don Burchell put his life on the line to save a deer that had fallen through thin ice on a local pond. Once the deer was ashore, the only thing that kept it from dying of hypothermia and stress was the fire that Don built to warm it. After an hour or so the deer finally moved off on its own. Dedication to duty like this is common among our officers, who consider such danger and actions just part of the job.

— WCO CHARLES J. ARCOVITCH, UNIONDALE

Opportunities Galore

PERRY — Last fall I ran into Hunter-Trapper Ed instructor Ferm McClure and local taxidermist John Kline pheasant hunting, and they told me they had hunted ducks on the Susquehanna River earlier that morning and were planning to hunt turkeys in the afternoon. And I thought I was busy.

— WCO WILLIAM M. WILLIAMS, MILLERS TOWN

All to Themselves

UNION — On December 16 Deputy Blyler and I checked two trappers near Lewisburg, Johnson and Mike Miller from Mifflinburg, who up until that date had trapped more than 700 muskrats. Johnson said he had never experienced such success in his 60 years of trapping. He also mentioned that he hadn't seen anyone else trapping all season.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Freak Mishap

MERCER — I noticed several deer quietly feeding in a winter wheat field, and as I cautiously approached they seemed extremely relaxed for being just after hunting season. I was surprised at just how relaxed, however, when I was able to walk right up to a large doe while the others scampered away. When I reached out and touched the doe, she fell over and was unable to get back up. I then discovered a puncture wound at the base of the neck that had apparently been caused by a branch that the deer impaled itself on.

— DEPUTY TERRY MCCLELLAND, GROVE CITY

Chamber Another "Note"

SOMERSET — I went pheasant hunting with one of my fellow officers, and at one point he got the perfect shot at a silhouetted ringneck. All I heard was *click*, however, while the pheasant sailed to safety. "Thanks for my Field Note, Scott," I said, as he only then chambered a fresh round.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE



Counting Sheep

TIOGA — During buck season Deputy Ralph Youmans and I noticed a hunter sound asleep in a treestand. He sat up, rubbed his eyes and then noticed us, and when we asked if he had seen any deer, he responded, "Not even in my dreams."

— WCO JOHN J. SNYDER, WELLSBORO

Seems Like . . .

GREENE — WCOs never know where an investigation will lead, and sometimes we end up barking up the wrong tree. I've investigated spotlighting after hours that turned out to be a railroad crew checking tracks; a jacklighted buck in the bed of a truck that was actually an archery target; and a call about a turkey taken out of season that turned out to be a tame one that was the guest of honor at Thanksgiving dinner.

— WCO RODNEY L. BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Ouch!

As the Southeast Region Office was being remodeled, we were all looking forward to moving from our temporary office trailers. Moving supplies, files and desks, and adapting to the trailers, while continuing to service the public was a real challenge. But as I struggled through the ordeal, I kept asking myself: Where else can a guy work and actually find himself sitting on a porcupine quill?

— LAWRENCE J. GALLAGHER, MAINTENANCE, SE REGION, READING

Dedicated Mom

LYCOMING — I got a call last summer about a bear that had been struck by a vehicle near the Loyalsockville bridge. After searching for it with no luck, however, my deputies and I called it quits. A few weeks later I received a call about an injured bear with three cubs in the same area, but once again the bear was gone when I arrived. The bear was spotted several times after that, and it became known as the “hand-stand bear” because it walked by picking up its body with its front paws and swinging it through. Unfortunately, the bear was hit by a vehicle again and had to be put down, but she raised her three cubs, as each weighed between 70-90 pounds at the time.

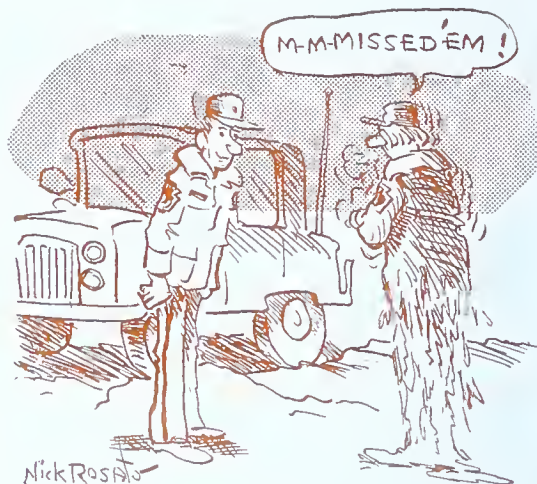
— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT,
MONTROUSEVILLE



Quick Thinking

WESTMORELAND — I was instructing deputy WCO candidate Wayne Weitzel in the ways of locating and checking beaver traps, and was also trying to impress him at how well I could maneuver around and across the beaver pond and dam without so much as even a minor slip on the ice. As I made my final leap from the ice to dry land, however, the ice gave way and I found myself nearly hip deep in water. Embarrassed, I leaned over, looked at the undercut bank and said, “Nope, no traps under here.”

— WCO GARY TOWARD, HYDE PARK



How is He With Banana Peels?

VENANGO — Before an applicant becomes a deputy he or she must go through a one-year probationary period, during which they are observed, evaluated and rated. Their performance could be described as “skating on thin ice,” as everything is critiqued. Probationary Deputy Ken Clark has cut the mustard so far, however, we were checking beaver trappers recently when he went to check some hunters getting into a vehicle across the pond. Ken was back at our vehicle after only a few minutes, and when I asked about the hunters he said he didn’t check them. I wondered why until I noticed his uniform; he was soaked to the waist. It seems he had broken through the ice while walking across the pond. I guess he can skate on thin ice but has trouble walking on it.

— WCO LEONARD C. HREBAR, OIL CITY

Unbelievable

FULTON — We were using a deer decoy to deter road hunting during the early muzzleloader season, and my deputies and I barely had time to move away from the decoy after setting it up when a man stopped and shot at it. As I issued citations the man said, “I thought you guys worked for us.” I replied, “We work for sportsmen and wildlife.”

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER,
NEEDMORE

Good Idea

YORK — As I sat in my vehicle, stranded on the side of the road, I thought about the mistakes I've made during my first hunting season as a WCO. I decided that the most important thing to remember is to put gas in my truck.

— WCO RODNEY MEE, EAST BERLIN

Snow Delay?

CRAWFORD — The rough early winter weather here caused some school closings and business delays, but I had to chuckle when a Pymatuning goose blind reservation holder from Pittsburgh called to see if hunting was canceled.

— WCO DAVID L. MYERS, LINESVILLE



Rough Group

BRADFORD — Land Manager Steve Gehringer, Deputy Charlie Fox and I had been patrolling on foot during small game season, and at one point we sent Deputy Fox back to get the vehicle so he could drive around and pick us up on another road. In a few minutes Charlie called on the radio to inform us that the landowner was holding him hostage, and that in return for his freedom, the man wanted a crate of pheasants released on his land. Our land managers must receive training in hostage negotiations because Steve quickly radioed back, "Sorry, Charlie, you're not worth a crate of pheasants."

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Think About It

MONROE — Thanks to the actions of two concerned sportsmen I was able to apprehend two individuals for killing several deer one night. Many times people tell me that there's nothing wrong with this activity if the poachers need the meat. There's plenty wrong with it. Not only is it a blatant theft of our wildlife resources, but it's also extremely dangerous. These two individuals discharged a firearm in an area where just the night before a wilderness trail walk for kids took place.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Honest Mistake

PERRY — Deputy applicant Steve Shaffer asked me about the permits required for purchasing roadkilled wildlife. I showed him the booklet containing the permits and the fee schedule. When he noted that the fee for a bear was \$25 per foot, he asked why it didn't just list \$100, because all bears have four feet. That refers to the length of the animal, Steve, not how it gets around.

— WCO JIM BROWN, LOYSVILLE

Misfire

BLAIR — I was helping PGC photographer Hal Korber get some law enforcement photos when Hal accidentally hit his shutter release while his camera was pointing down at the boots of one of the officers. We all agreed it was a good thing he was armed with a camera and not a gun.

— WCO SCOTT THOMAS, TYRONE

Try It

MERCER — Youth Field Day was another success here last year, as 210 youngsters attended. It seems we get more kids each year, but not new adult volunteers, as the same group of sportsmen is doing all the work. Volunteer for a Youth Field Day. You won't regret it and you'll be appreciated by staff and a bunch of happy kids.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Psychic

BUTLER — During doe season, while showing Deputy Skip Wagle how to fill out a replacement tag for a spoiled deer, Deputy Dan Eshenbaugh said, "Just write the tag number in this space, say it was 552." Astonished, Deputy Wagle asked Dan how he knew that was the man's backtag number, and Dan said that he didn't, he had just picked a number at random to use as an example. Well, Dan, if you can pick the right number out of 17,600 antlerless licenses, we need to talk about the next lottery drawing.

— WCO MARIO PICCIRILLI, FRANKLIN



That's a New One

MONROE — Coolbaugh Township road crew worker Bob Washer told me that a woman who had just moved into the area wanted the deer crossing sign removed from in front of her home. She was fed up with deer crossing in her yard and wanted them to cross elsewhere.

— WCO PETER F. SUGGENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Don't Wish Too Hard

LANCASTER — I've gotten calls about bears, otters, beavers and coyotes in my district, but in January I had a new experience. I picked up a roadkilled bobcat near the town of Buck. Gee, I wonder if we can get some of those elk?

— WCO LINDA L. SWANK, KIRKWOOD

Slip of the Pen

While checking deer at hunting camps, WCO Rich Cramer and I noticed one that had an improperly filled out tag. I asked the group that had gathered who the buck belonged to. A 12-year-old hunter claimed the deer, and I asked him to read the tag. He read his name, address, and so on, but when he got to county where taken he read, "United States." This earned him a round of laughs from the senior camp members, and I'll bet he'll never live this one down.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Jump Through Hoops

WARREN — Dispatcher Bill Elliott told about a caller who was in dire need of a someone to remove a skunk from under her house. I stopped at the game lands building, grabbed a trap and headed to the caller's home. When I arrived, I was informed by the caller and her daughters that this matter must be taken care of immediately. Knowing the ladies quite well, and not wanting any trouble, I immediately set the trap. The next morning the females (my wife and daughters) were quite relieved to find that the skunk had been removed.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, TIDIOUTE

Success

YORK — Many hunters were concerned and apprehensive about the antlerless season opener being held on the last Saturday of buck season, but in my opinion this was a great decision, not only from a deer management standpoint, but also as a public relations tool. Hunters of all ages had a fantastic time, and we checked deer in all parts of my district and noticed a lot of smiling faces on younger folks. I recall checking a family on SGL 242 near Dillsburg, where the 16-year-old daughter had taken her first deer; she was one happy young lady.

— WCO G.C. HOUGHTON, EMIGSVILLE

Preliminary 2001-2002 seasons and bag limits

THE FIRST ELK SEASON in 70 years and greatly expanded deer and small game hunting opportunities highlight the 2001-2002 seasons and bags limits proposed by the Board of Commissioners at the January meeting. **Seasons and bag limits will not become final until approved at the April meeting.**

Based largely on proposals by Dr. Gary Alt, a concurrent antlered and antlerless deer season for rifle hunters, an October antlerless deer rifle season for junior and senior license holders and — once again — the option to use all antlerless deer tags on public and private lands mark significant changes to Pennsylvania deer hunting. More specifically, this new deer season structure is designed to correct the buck-to-doe ratio, reduce the hunting pressure on bucks, provide greater hunting opportunities, and reduce the affects of weather on the overall deer harvest.

“Our goal is to make Pennsylvania one of the leading states for research and management of white-tailed deer,” stated Dr. Gary Alt. “The good news is that there is tremendous potential to improve our program. We need to make a lot of changes, each of which will be evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency.

“These proposals reflect the change in a society where hunting is competing with other interests,” Alt explained. “By expanding deer hunting opportunities, more people will be able

to fit hunting into their schedules, rather than having to fit their lives around hunting.

“The new proposals may encourage hunters to hold out for bigger bucks or larger does. Also, by allowing hunters to put venison in the freezer earlier in the year and by offering increased opportunities to harvest antlerless deer, pressure on bucks should be reduced.”

Under the concurrent deer hunting proposal, the regular antlerless deer season will start on Saturday, Nov. 24, two days before the traditional start of rifle buck season, this year on Monday, Nov. 26, and run through the entire “buck” season, which this year will conclude on Saturday, December 8.

The Board retained the early muzzleloader antlerless deer season, but scheduled it for Thursday through Saturday, Oct. 18-20. The Board also approved allowing juniors and seniors, disabled persons with a permit to use a vehicle, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services and U.S. Coast Guard to hunt antlerless deer from Oct. 18-20 with any lawful sporting arm of their choice, provided they have valid antlerless deer licenses.

“This expanded opportunity is another way the Game Commission is seeking to enable families to spend more time afield together,” Alt said. “So, in addition to harvesting more antlerless deer before the rut, we also will allow these groups to hunt

antlerless deer with the sporting arm of their choice.”

Additionally, during the early muzzleloader antlerless deer season, bowhunters will be allowed to take antlered deer, not just antlerless like last year.

The Board eliminated the “Private Land” restriction on unsold antlerless deer licenses and, furthermore, hunters will now be allowed to obtain up to two unsold antlerless deer licenses, making a total of three antlerless deer licenses a hunter may obtain. (Hunters may apply for unlimited tags in the Special Regulations Areas.)

The Board approved a motion by Commissioner Stephen L. Mohr to have an early statewide archery antlerless deer hunt, beginning on Sept. 15. The early antlerless-only bow season will continue and then run concurrently with the regular statewide archery antlered deer season, which will begin on Sept. 29. Both early archery deer seasons will conclude on Nov. 10.

Under Mohr’s motion, the late archery seasons also have different start times: the antlerless-only archery season will begin on Dec. 10, and the antlered archery season will begin on Dec. 26. Both late seasons will conclude Jan. 12, 2002.

The Board also approved a motion by Mohr to have the antlerless deer season in the Special Regulations Areas run from Nov. 24-Jan. 12, 2002.

Commissioners also approved to continue allowing multiple deer harvests per day, but changed the statewide field possession limit so that hunters need only tag a deer before harvesting subsequent deer, not take the first deer to any sort of “designated drop off point.” (In Special Regulations Areas, hunters are not required to tag a deer before attempting to harvest a subsequent deer.)

Alt is holding a series of meetings across the state to explain these proposals. Visit the Game Commission’s website, www.pgc.state.pa.us, and go

Alt to discuss deer on PCN

DR. GARY ALT is scheduled to appear on the Pennsylvania Cable Network’s weekly “PCN Call-In Program” on Thursday, March 22, to discuss the new direction of the deer management program and to answer questions from callers (1-888-730-1310). The program is scheduled to air live at 7 p.m. (*Check local listings for the PCN channel in your area.*)

“Deer management remains a complex, but critically important issue for all Pennsylvanians,” said Alt. “We need to explain our new initiatives to the public, and PCN’s Call-In program offers a perfect opportunity to maximize our outreach efforts.”

Available on 110 cable systems throughout the commonwealth, PCN is a nonprofit, nonpartisan cable television network that serves as the commonwealth’s version of C-SPAN. PCN airs unedited live and same-day coverage of Pennsylvania Senate and House floor proceedings and committee hearings; along with press conferences, speeches and other public forums where the business of the state is conducted. PCN’s live interactive call-in program allows viewers to speak directly with government officials, newsmakers and other knowledgeable parties on current commonwealth issues.

to "2001 News Releases" for a schedule.

"I am committed to holding a public meeting within 50 miles of every Pennsylvanian, so that everyone has an opportunity to hear directly from

the Game Commission what we are proposing and why we believe this is the right direction," Alt said. "I want to thank legislators and local sportsmen's clubs for sponsoring these meetings."

First elk season in 70 years

THE STATE'S first elk hunting season in more than 70 years has been given preliminary approval.

"This season is based on more than three decades of biological research," said Rawley Cogan, PGC elk biologist. "In January 2000, the annual survey indicated the elk population to be 566. Based on recent trends, we would expect the elk population to be about 650 animals this year.

"If we do not hunt elk now, we expect to face more conflicts with landowners, more vehicle collisions and potential habitat destruction, and increased competition between elk and other wildlife for food and habitat."

Last year the General Assembly and Gov. Tom Ridge enacted Senate Bill 612 (Act 111 of 2000), which created an elk hunting license and established a fee of \$25 for residents and \$250 for nonresidents. The new law also allows the Game Commission to accept applications, along with a \$10 nonrefundable fee, to hold a public drawing for a number of elk licenses to be determined by the agency.

Applications for the drawing will not be accepted until after the elk season is approved at the April meeting. If the Board gives final approval, applications will be accepted by mail and via "The Outdoor Shop" on the Game Commission's website.

The Board approved minimum standards for sporting arms and ammunition for elk hunting to include: centerfire rifles or handguns at least

27-caliber; shotguns at least 12-gauge; muzzleloading long-guns at least 50-caliber that propel a single projectile of at least 210 grains; any all-lead projectiles designed to expand on impact and at least 130 grains; bows with a draw weight of at least 45 pounds or a draw length of no less than 28 inches; and any arrows equipped with a broadhead that has an outside diameter or width of at least an inch and no less than two fixed, steel-cutting edges in the same plane throughout the length of the cutting surface.

An antlered elk would be defined as having "at least one spike visible above the hairline." An antlerless elk would be defined as "an elk without antlers, or an elk without at least one spike visible above the hairline."

Applicants for the elk license drawing will have the option to include their preference, if drawn, for either an antlered or antlerless elk license. All hunters drawn for an elk license and alternates must attend a Game Commission orientation program before receiving their elk licenses. Elk hunters and those accompanying them must wear a minimum of 250 square inches of fluorescent orange.

Under the proposal preliminarily approved, no elk hunting will take place in the vicinity of the elk viewing area on Winslow Hill, Benezette Township, Elk County.

This elk hunting proposal must be approved by the Board at the April meeting before taking effect.

Small game, turkey and furtaking changes proposed

PROPOSED 2001-2002 seasons and bag limits for small game hunting include a nearly across-the-board expansion of hunting opportunities. Other changes were made to fall turkey hunting, beaver trapping and the application process for the limited bobcat permits.

The youth hunt for squirrels was set for Saturday, Oct. 6, and Monday, Oct. 8. This opportunity is open to eligible junior hunters (ages 12-16), with or without a license. All youngsters must have successfully completed a hunter education course and be accompanied as required by law.

On a motion from Commissioner Mohr, the Board advanced the late grouse seasons to run from Dec. 10-Jan. 26, 2002, and the late squirrel season to be Dec. 10-Feb. 28, 2002.

In response to testimony offered by farmers on Jan. 21, Commissioner Robert J. Gilford offered a motion that was approved to again set the traditional small game season openers for rabbits, pheasants and quail for Saturday, Oct. 27. The regular season for these species would close Saturday, Nov. 24. A motion by Commissioner Mohr was approved by the Board to push the opening day of the late seasons for rabbits and male and female pheasants in designated areas back to Dec. 10, and would run through Feb. 28, 2002.

In response to comments from hare hunters on Jan. 21, a motion from Commissioner Samuel J. Dunkle was approved to reduce the snowshoe hare bag limits to one daily and two in possession.

A recommendation to add Beaver, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer to the either-sex pheasant hunting zone was

approved.

Commissioners chose to close the fall turkey season in TMA 9A because a trap and transfer of wild birds into the area is currently underway.

Several regulatory changes were proposed for the beaver trapping season. As proposed, beginning July 1, the 50-cent fee for beaver tags will be eliminated; tags will be provided at no cost. The Board preliminarily approved removing a regulation that prohibits setting traps and snares on or within 15 feet of an established beaver dam or beaver house in Furbearer Management Area 3. The prohibition would remain in place in all other furbearer management zones.

Beaver trappers will be allowed to increase the number of traps or snares to a combined total of 20, no more than 10 of which may be traps. No more than two of the traps may be body-gripping types, except in Furbearer Management Zone 3 and the counties of McKean, Potter and Tioga, where the two body-gripping limit would not apply.

A new regulation would allow those applying for a bobcat permit to use a form supplied by the Commission or use an electronic application via "The Outdoor Shop" on the agency's website. Applications mailed to the agency's Harrisburg headquarters must be postmarked no later than Aug. 17. The public drawing for the limited number of bobcat permits will be held at the Harrisburg headquarters on Sept. 14. Also, in order to provide a unique application identifier, all applicants will be required to provide their Social Security number. The Board also approved an amendment to exclude from this year's drawing

those hunters and trappers who received bobcat permits for the 2000-2001 season. The bobcat season again is being proposed for Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3, for Oct. 13-Feb. 23, 2002, for hunting; and from Oct. 14-Feb. 23, 2002 for trapping.

The Board is proposing to discon-

tinue a regulation that bans the use of traps with a jaw spread larger than 4½ inches on and along Pine Creek.

A complete list of all seasons and bag limits approved for 2001-02 begins on page 43. Again, these proposals must be approved by the Board at the April meeting before taking effect.

Schleiden and Palone join commission

RUSSELL E. SCHLEIDEN of Centre Hall, Centre County, and ROXANE S. PALONE of Kirby, Greene County, are two new members of the Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners and were able to serve at the January meeting.

Schleiden was sworn in by Centre County Judge Thomas Kistler, at a ceremony held in Bellefonte on December 19, 2000. Palone was sworn in by District Justice John W. Barron, of Johnstown, at a ceremony held at the Game Commission's Southwest Region Office in Ligonier. (See page 2 for her swearing-in address.)

Gov. Ridge nominated Schleiden to the Board on May 18, 2000, and Palone on October 19, 1999. Both Palone and Schleiden were unanimously confirmed by the Pennsylvania Senate on November 21, 2000.

An active hunter since age 12, Schleiden has 30 years of experience working with government agencies and local and statewide organizations on wildlife and environmental issues. In 1968, Schleiden joined the firm of Penn's Cave Inc., where he currently serves as CEO. As such, he oversees the operations of the Penn's Cave facilities; establishes and develops the Penn's Cave North American Wildlife Sanctuary Tours; and integrates several North American species on a 1,000-acre farm and tourist attraction



Russell E. Schleiden

by cultivating semi-wild and natural wild areas. He also operates Penn's Cave Airport, a privately owned, public-use airport.

He has participated in various Game Commission and Pennsylvania State University projects, including: a landowner game co-op program; a farm-crop damage study; a cave-bat hibernation study; a pheasant-reproduction research program; and the fawn survival study being conducted in the Penns Valley area of Centre County and the Quehanna Wild Area.

He also serves as a regional board

member of the Valleys of the Susquehanna Tourist Promotion Region, which promotes the natural qualities of an 8-county region, including hunting, fishing, hiking and wildlife observation.

Schleiden is a member of Ducks Unlimited, the North American Hunt Club, the Union County Sportsmen's Club, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and a life-member of the NRA. He is a past president of the Pennsylvania Caves Association, a former member of the Tourist Advisory Committee to the Secretary of Commerce, a former member of the Centre County Visitor and Convention Bureau Board of Directors, and a former member of the national Elk Breeders Association.

From 1963-68, Schleiden served as a U.S. Air Force pilot, attaining the rank of captain. He received a bachelor's degree from Penn State University.

Schleiden lives in Centre Hall with his wife, Jeanne. They have two grown children, William and Jeanine. He fills the vacant seat for District 3, which is comprised of Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter counties.

Palone, the first woman appointed to a full, 8-year term on the board, is a native of Waynesburg, and a lifelong hunter and angler. "Women are the fastest growing segment of the hunting and shooting sports population," Palone remarked at her swearing in ceremony. "I hope to serve as a role model for all women wanting to join the hunting and trapping heritage."

Currently, she is a rural develop-

ment specialist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Action Programs. Prior to that, she served as a watershed specialist with the USDA and is best known as the co-editor of the publication "Chesapeake Bay Riparian Handbook." She received the Mid-Atlantic Resource Conservation and Development Association Partnership Award in 1997.

From 1974 through 1977, Palone served in the U.S. Marine Corps and was honorably discharged at the rank of Sergeant. She served at the Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, Arizona, after graduating first in her class at Disbursing School, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Palone received her master's degree in forest management from West Virginia University in 1988. She received her bachelor's degree in biology, graduating cum laude, from Glenville State College, West Virginia, in 1986.

Palone is a life member of the NRA; the Second Amendment Foundation; the Western Gateway Chapter of the Society of American Foresters; the Pennsylvania Forestry Association; the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts; the Southern Alleghenies Conservancy, Bedford County; the Waynesburg Sportsman Association, Greene County; Greene County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League; and the Three Rivers Detachment, Marine Corps League.

Palone lives in Kirby with her husband, Vincent. She fills the vacant seat for District 2, which is comprised of Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington and Westmoreland counties.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Dr. Gary Alt's Speaking Schedule

In an effort to reach every Pennsylvanian interested in the Game Commission's new deer management initiatives, Dr. Gary Alt has been putting on seminars throughout the state, hosted in most cases by legislators and area sportsmen's clubs. Here is a schedule for March. For possible changes and additional seminars, visit the Game Commission's website.

Allentown, Lehigh County: Thursday, March 1, 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., Lehigh Valley Outdoor Expo Sports Show, Agricultural Hall, Allentown Fairgrounds. Entrance fee to the show is \$7 for adults and \$2 for children age 6-12;

Sandy Lake, Mercer County: Saturday, March 3, 9 a.m., Lakeview High School, along Route 62.

St. Benedict, Cambria County: Saturday, March 3, 6:30 p.m., Rembrandt Club, 393 Jackman Rd.

Waynesburg, Greene County: Sunday, March 4, 7 p.m., Waynesburg Central High School, 30 Zimmerman Dr., just off Exit 3 of Interstate 79.

Townville, Crawford County: Monday, March 5, 6 p.m., Maplewood Elementary School, 32695 State Highway 408.

Montoursville, Lycoming County: Thursday, March 8, 7 p.m., Montoursville High School, Arch Street.

New Bloomfield, Perry County: Sunday, March 11, 2 p.m., West Perry High School, along Route 274 near the intersection with Route 74.

Halifax, Dauphin County: Wednesday, March 14, 7 p.m., Halifax High School auditorium, 3940 Peters Mountain Rd.

Jim Thorpe, Carbon County: Thursday, March 15, 7 p.m., Jim Thorpe Memorial Hall, 101 East 10th St.

Montrose, Susquehanna County: Friday, March 16, 7 p.m., Montrose High School, High School Road, just off of Route 706.

Clearfield, Clearfield County: Saturday, March 17, 4:30 p.m., Clearfield Fair Grounds, Driving Park.

Clarion, Clarion County: Friday, March 23, 7 p.m., Holiday Inn, 45 Holiday Inn Rd., just off Exit 9 of Interstate 80. The event is part of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs' Spring Convention. Dr. Alt's presentation will be open to the public.

Muncy, Lycoming County: Saturday, March 24, lectures at various times throughout the day, The Pennsylvania Outdoor Life Expo, Lycoming Mall, just off Route 180. Dr. Alt also will be available throughout the day to answer questions. The event is being hosted by "Pennsylvania Outdoor Life" program, which airs on WNEP-TV Channel 16.

Brockway, Jefferson County: Sunday, March 25, 6 p.m., Brockway High School, 100 Alexander St.

North Strabane Township, Washington County: Thursday, March 29, 6:30 p.m., North Strabane Township Fire Hall, along Route 19.

Bedford, Bedford County: Friday, March 30, 6:30 p.m., Bedford High School, 330 East John St.

Crossbows approved for limited use in special regs areas

THE USE OF CROSSBOWS in Special Regulations Areas during the regular firearms deer season, Nov. 24-Jan. 12, has been preliminarily approved by the Game Commission.

"We need to move cautiously in any effort to incorporate crossbows into our deer hunting seasons, so we can measure what impact, if any, crossbow hunters may have," explained Vern Ross. "Special Regulations Areas serve as fine testing grounds for the crossbow, because they demand short-range sporting arms and have excessive deer populations. Our interest now is measuring what type of following the crossbow attracts, which will help guide us in future decisions."

Under the proposed regulation, a

crossbow is defined as: "A device consisting of a bow fixed transversely on a stock, the string of which is released by a trigger mechanism, has a mechanical safety and propels an arrow." The new regulation also requires crossbows used for deer hunting to have a draw weight of not less than 125 pounds nor more than 200 pounds.

Previously, only hunters with permanent disabilities were eligible for a crossbow permit. However, legislation passed at the end of 2000 removed crossbows from the list of unlawful devices and methods for hunting. The new law also allows hunters with temporary disabilities to apply for a permit to use a crossbow throughout the state for up to one year.

Spock elected president

COMMISSIONER Nicholas Spock, M.D., of Shamokin, Northumberland County, has been elected president of the Commission. Dr. Spock, who previously served as Board vice-president, was appointed to the Commission on Nov. 22, 1994. He has operated a family medicine practice in Shamokin since 1961.

Commissioner Samuel J. Dunkle of Duncansville, Blair County, was elected vice president. A member of the Board since 1996, Dunkle previously served as Board secretary. Commissioner Stephen L. Mohr, Bainbridge, Lancaster County, was elected Board secretary. Mohr was appointed to the Board on Dec. 9, 1997.

In other action, the Board:

- Approved increasing per diems for Deputy Wildlife Conservation Officers from \$50 to \$57, effective July 1, 2001, and from \$57 to \$65, effective July 1, 2002. The last per diem increase was enacted in 1992, when the rate was increased from \$36 to the current \$50. Per diems are issued to cover Deputy WCO out-of-pocket expenses, including gasoline, firearms, radios and use of their personal vehicles. The agency's current Deputy WCO force numbers nearly 700. In addition to per diems, deputies are provided uniforms, ammunition and training.

- Authorized a cooperative agreement with the National Wild Turkey Federation to partly fund a full-time biologist to work closely with the Game Commission and other northeastern states on wild turkey management projects. First discussed between Game Commissioners and NWTF representatives in October, the agreement authorizes the Game Commission to provide \$20,000 per year over the next three years to help fund this position. NWTF must provide a report at the end of each fiscal year detailing both time devoted and accomplishments made in support of Pennsylvania's wild turkey resource. Since 1985, NWTF has spent more than \$1.6 million on 786 projects in Pennsylvania.

- Gave preliminary approval to increase wildlife replacement costs as compensation for certain crimes against wildlife. Fines for unlawfully killing or possessing an elk, bear or threatened or endangered bird or mammal will be not less than \$800 nor more than \$5,000; for an illegally taken elk with at least six points on one antler, not less than \$5,000 nor more than \$10,000.

- Gave preliminary approval to further safeguard elk by designating the species a "protected animal." The regulatory change would ensure no elk could be killed for causing property damage by any landowner. The Game Commission, upon notification, will make every effort to discourage the elk from returning or live trap and transfer the animal. Should those efforts fail, the elk may be put down by a Game Commission representative or an authorized individual.

- Gave preliminary approval to allow the use of web order numbers to replace archery, muzzleloader, bear and migratory game bird licenses for hunters who possess a valid hunting license and want to purchase one of these licenses through the agency's e-commerce site. Licenses would be validated by the license holder writing a web order number in the appropriate space provided on the general hunting license.

- Gave final approval to a measure to charge Internet license orders an additional \$1.50 to cover shipping and handling costs. Other merchandise orders via the Internet will be charged shipping and handling costs based on a graduated scale.

- Gave preliminary approval to provide remedial hunter education courses to offenders who were involved in hunting related shooting incidents or other mandatory revocations and have had their hunting and furtaking privileges revoked. Students of the courses, expected to be available this spring, shall pay a \$50 enrollment charge. The course includes instruction on safe use and handling of firearms, hunter ethics and hunting laws and regulations.

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered** species or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

- Adopted a regulation permitting the use of an electronic impulse to detonate the primer or main powder of cartridges in lawful manually-operated firearms.
- Agreed to establish an "Archery Equipment Review Committee" to look into the development of simple and meaningful specifications for bowhunting equipment and to define the parameters of the sport.
- Gave preliminary approval to the use of electronic sound amplification devices that are completely contained in or on a hunter's ear. This shall not include any device that completely covers the ear or ears.
- Agreed to pursue developing a set of guidelines for commissioners that could provide guidance to both new and veteran commissioners.
- Directed staff to investigate using surveys and human dimension professionals to further define what more the Game Commission can do to more proficiently and satisfactorily accomplish its mission.
- Agreed to name the after-Christmas or late muzzleloader season as the "flintlock muzzleloader season."
- Set the dates for the next meeting for April 9-10. Seasons and bag limits for the 2001-2002 will be finalized at the April meeting, which will be held in the Harrisburg headquarters. Other 2001 meetings were scheduled for June 4-5 and Oct. 1-2, both in the Harrisburg headquarters.

Game News subscriptions/PGC sale items available online

THE GAME COMMISSION has entered the age of e-commerce. At "The Outdoor Shop" on the agency's website, people may now buy *Game News* subscriptions — new, renewals and gifts — even change addresses. Also available are the agency's books, videos, patches and fine art prints and other items.

"The Pennsylvania Game Commission has been striving to improve its customer service," said Vern Ross, Commission executive director. "By offering our customers hunting and furtaking licenses and now *Game News*

and other Game Commission products over the Internet, we will be providing around the clock service."

The Game Commission began exploring e-commerce options in 1999. With the support and guidance of Gov. Tom Ridge's budget and administrative offices, \$250,000 in Game Fund monies in the Game Commission's 2000-2001 budget were set aside to launch and run the project.

"By casting our potential sales net across the World Wide Web, we can expect to recover those funds and more," Ross said.

As of 1/7/01, 39 bobcat harvests had been reported from the following counties: Bradford (5), Cameron (1), Centre (1), Clearfield (4), Clinton (5), Elk (2), Luzerne (3), Lycoming (7), McKean (1), Pike (1), Potter (3), Sullivan (2), and Tioga (4). Most taken by trappers; 7 were shot by hunters. The largest taken was believed to be a 33-pound male in Lycoming County.

Deer and bear scoring sessions on tap

HAVE A BIG Pennsylvania white-tailed deer or black bear trophy you would like to have measured and entered into the Game Commission's official big game records?

This month and next the agency will be conducting scoring sessions throughout the state. This will be the 13th measuring session held since the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association and the Game Commission started this program in 1965, as a way to showcase and promote the outstanding big game trophies being taken in our state.

Over the years, scoring sessions have been held every two or three years. This scoring session, however, will be the first in six years. That, coupled with the fact that deer and bear hunting over the past six years

has been better than ever, will likely mean that more trophies than ever before will probably be brought in for measuring.

Therefore, at least one scoring session will be held in each of the Game Commission's six field regions. Trophies will be measured by PGC personnel using Boone & Crockett scoring procedures.

Those with the largest typical deer and nontypical deer taken with a firearm; largest typical and nontypical deer taken by archery equipment; and largest bear measured during this session will be honored at the fall conference of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, being held in DuBois, the weekend of September 22.

Following is the schedule of the upcoming big game scoring sessions.

Southwest Region: April 7, beginning at 8:30 a.m., National Guard Armory, Main Street, Ligonier (across from the Southwest Region Office).

Northwest Region: March 31, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. (or until we run out of trophies to score), Rocky Grove Fire Hall. Take Route 417 north out of Franklin, make a right turn at the blinking light. The fire hall is on the left.

Southcentral Region: March 10, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Franklin County, New Franklin Ruritan Club, south on Route 81, exit 5. At light, turn left (south on Route 316 approximately two miles, to intersection in New Franklin (only intersection in the town). Turn left. The Ruritan/Community Center driveway will be about 100 yards ahead on the right.

March 17, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Huntingdon County, McConnellstown Fire hall, McConnellstown. From Route 22 in Huntingdon, take Route 26 south and go 3 miles to McConnellstown. Fire hall is on the right. From Bedford, take Route 26 north approximately 35 miles to McConnellstown.

Northcentral Region: March 31, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Elk County, St. Marys Middle School and, also March 31, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., in Clinton County, the Northcentral Region Office, off Route 44, 1½ miles south of Jersey Shore.

Southeast Region: April 22 & 29, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area Visitor Center. Middle Creek is on SGL 46, on the Lancaster/Lebanon County line, just south of Kleinfeltersville.

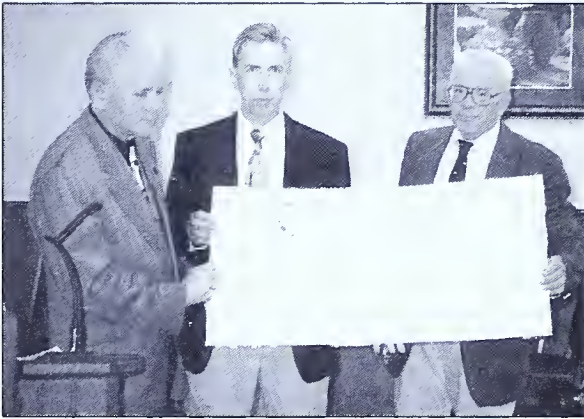
Northeast Region: April 7, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Dallas Middle School Gym, off Route 309 north on Hildebrandt Road.

Taxidermy Exam coming up

THE Game Commission's spring taxidermy exam will be held April 9, 10 & 11 at the Southcentral Region Office in Huntingdon. Applicants interested in taking this test to become a licensed taxidermist in Pennsylvania need to submit an application and appropriate fee to their district wild-

life conservation officers by March 4. Applications may be obtained from any region office, or by calling 717-783-8164.

Only individuals licensed by the Game Commission may practice taxidermy on a commercial basis in Pennsylvania.



TOM BEAVER, center, President of the Pennsylvania Falconry & Hawk Trust presented a \$1,000 donation to the Game Commission's land acquisition program, in recognition of the fact that game lands are home to many raptor species, and that they're open to hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts. PGC Executive Director Vern Ross, left, and Public Affairs Coordinator John Plowman accepted the donation on behalf of the agency.

SGL 323 dedicated



A NEW GAME LANDS, SGL 323, has been established in Centre County. Known as the Curtin Estate, the 2,410-acre parcel was made possible through a \$770,000 grant from

the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resource's "Community Conservation Partnership Program." Present during the dedication ceremony were, left to right, Bert Kisner, Assistant Engineer, PennDOT; John Oliver, Secretary, DCNR; Josh First, The Conservation Fund; Senator Jake Corman; and PGC Commissioner Russell Schleiden.

DCNR's Community Partnership Program is the Ridge Administration's effort to, among many things, conserve natural and cultural resources and provide outdoor recreational opportunities. PennDOT provided supplemental funding. Also involved in this acquisition was the Clearwater Conservancy.

Proposed 2001-2002 seasons and bag limits

Hunting

Squirrels, Red, Gray, Black and Fox (Combined): Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without required license - Oct. 6-8; Fall Season - Oct. 13-Nov. 24; Late Season - Dec. 10-Feb. 28, 2002 (6 daily, 12 in possession limit after first day).

Ruffed Grouse: Oct. 13-Nov. 24 and Dec. 10-Jan. 26, 2002 (2 daily, 4 possession).

There is no open season for taking ruffed grouse in that portion of SGL 176 in Centre County that is posted "RESEARCH AREA - NO GROUSE HUNTING."

Rabbit (Cottontail): Oct. 27-Nov. 24 and Dec. 10-Feb. 28, 2002 (4 daily, 8 possession).

Pheasant: Male Only - Oct. 27-Nov. 24. Male & female in designated areas - Oct. 27-Nov. 24 and Dec. 10-Feb. 28, 2002 (2 daily, 4 in possession).

Bobwhite Quail: Oct. 27-Nov. 24 (4 daily, 8 possession). (Closed in Adams, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Fulton, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, Snyder and York counties.)

Snowshoe (or varying) hares: Dec. 26-Jan. 1, 2002 (1 daily, 2 possession).

Woodchucks (Groundhogs): No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season.

Crows: July 1-Nov. 25 and Dec. 28-April 7, 2002, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday only. No limit.

Starlings and English Sparrows: No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season. No limit.

Wild Turkey (Male or Female): Management Areas 1A, 1B, 2 & 7A - Oct. 27-Nov. 10; Area 7B - Oct. 27-Nov. 3; Areas 3, 4, 5, 6 & 8 - Oct. 27-Nov. 17; Area 9B - Oct. 27-Nov. 3; and Area 9A - Closed to Fall Turkey Hunting. (1 bird limit, either sex).

Spring Gobbler (Bearded bird only): April 27, 2002-May 25, 2002.

Black Bear: Nov. 19-Nov. 21.

Elk (Antlered or Antlerless): Nov. 12-Nov. 17. Daily and season limit: one. (The Executive Director is authorized to extend by five days, from Dec. 26-Dec. 31, excluding Sunday, if the harvest quota is not met during the first season. If the quota is not met during the first extension, a second 5-day extension from Jan. 2, 2002-Jan. 7, 2002, excluding Sunday, may be ordered.)

Deer, Archery (Antlered) Statewide: Sept 29-Nov. 10 and Dec. 26-Jan. 12, 2002. One antlered deer, with 2 or more points to an antler or a spike 3 or more inches long, per season.**

Deer, Archery (Antlerless) Statewide: Sept 15-Nov. 10 and Dec. 10-Jan. 12, 2002. One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlered Deer Statewide: Nov. 26-Dec. 8. One antlered deer, with 2 or more points to an antler or a spike 3 or more inches long, per season.**

Antlerless Deer, (Statewide): Oct. 18-20. Junior and Senior License Holders, Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) Holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services or in the U.S. Coast Guard only, with required antlerless license. One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlerless Deer (Statewide): Nov. 24-Dec. 8. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlerless Flintlock (Statewide): Oct. 18-20. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlered or Antlerless Flintlock (Statewide): Dec. 26-Jan. 12, 2002. One antlered ** or one antlerless deer and an additional antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlerless (Military Bases): Hunting permitted on days established by the U.S. Department of the Army at Letterkenny Army Depot, Franklin County; New Cumberland Army Depot, York County; and Fort Richie, Raven Rock Site, Adams County. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Archery (Bow and arrows only) Antlered (Special Regulations Areas): Sept. 29-Nov. 10 & Dec. 26-Jan. 12, 2002. One antlered deer ** with 2 or more points to an antler or a spike 3 or more inches long.

Deer, Archery (Bow and arrows only) Antlerless (Special Regulations Areas): Sept. 15-Nov. 10 & Dec. 10-Jan. 12, 2002. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Antlered (Special Regulations Areas): Nov. 26-Dec. 8. One antlered deer ** with 2 or more points to an antler or a spike 3 or more inches long.

Deer, Antlerless (Special Regulations Areas): Nov. 24-Jan. 12, 2002. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

** only one antlered deer (buck) may be taken during the hunting license year.

Furbearer hunting seasons

Raccoon & Foxes: Oct. 13-Feb. 23, 2002, unlimited.

Coyote, Opossum, Skunks & Weasels: No closed season, with certain exceptions during deer and spring turkey seasons. No limits.

Bobcat: (Furbearer Management Zones 2 & 3) Oct. 13-Feb. 23, 2002. One per permit, only by those in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.

Trapping seasons

Mink & Muskrat: Nov. 18-Jan. 13, 2002. Unlimited.

Coyote, Foxes, Opossum, Raccoon, Skunks, Weasels: Oct. 14-Feb. 23, 2002. No limit.

Beaver: (Statewide) Dec. 26-March 31, 2002 (Limits vary depending on Furbearer Management Zone).

Bobcat: (Furbearer Management Zones 2 & 3) Oct. 14-Feb. 23, 2002. One per permit, only by those in possession of a Bobcat Hunting-Trapping permit.

Falconry

Squirrels (combined), Quail, Ruffed Grouse, Cottontail Rabbits, Snowshoe or Varying Hare, Ring-necked Pheasant (Male or Female combined): Sept. 1-March 31, 2002. Daily and field possession limits vary.

No open season on other wild birds or mammals. Waterfowl and Migratory Game Bird seasons will be established in accordance with Federal Regulations this summer.

That old saying that it's the simple things that mean a lot can be applied to hunting. Think about it, it's those humorous things, or special moments with family or friends, maybe a sunrise or sunset, that are more easily recalled about a particular hunt.

Unspectacular Moments May Be Best

ONLY OLDER FOLKS worry about making memories. The young are too busy with the present to be concerned about having something to remember. Later they find they did build memories, hardly meaning to. They were just out, alone or with their buddies or family, living the day for the day. Their mind, though, recorded the sights, sounds, scents and sensations for them to recall; or at least it got some of those down as memories for mental posterity.

Those who don't hunt probably assume that the most vibrant memories hunters have are of their major trophies. They assume that the clearest and dearest remembrances are of their heaviest-antlered buck, their longest-bearded gobbler or, possibly, a big bear they shot. Certainly if hunters were lucky or skillful enough to take what can be considered a trophy by the official record books, that experience is something that won't soon be forgotten.

But how clear are these recollections? If they purposely sit and stare at the mounted deer head, turkey fan and beard, or bear rug, surely they can remember some

of that hunt, probably most of it. I would expect they at least could recall the moments immediately before, during and after the shot — the center-point of the hunt when effort and happenstance collided in time and space.

But how much else of that penultimate hunting achievement have they lost? Do they remember who was with them, the color and feel of the day, the slant of sun or the spicy scent of the woods, the funny song that was playing on the radio on the drive there? Do they remember the unspectacular moments? If they are honest with themselves, are the unspectacular moments the ones that come to mind first?

We don't recall all that happens to us every day, not even the blissful days of successful hunts. No one has that kind of photographic memory; no one has total recall. We go through our day just doing and being, and what remains imprinted on the mind is pretty much at random. We just don't know what we'll recollect from today, a week, a year, 30 years from now. Maybe what is sharpest will be the most important occurrence, such as that call-shy



Bob Steiner

SIGHTING something like this red-bellied woodpecker near your deer stand might be something more easily recalled than the buck you took on that day. It's those little things that make our hunts so special.

longbeard that finally cooperates and comes in. Maybe it will be something quite ordinary, like the upwelling coffee aroma when you opened the thermos afterward, with the turkey dead and tagged at your feet.

There is no guarantee what about today will stay with us. Speaking for myself, my hunting memory is a crazy quilt of both spectacular and commonplace moments. I know I can't control which instances from each day afield will appear at the front of the line in my memories; I can only report them.

Take last fall's buck season. Certainly I have imbedded prominently, "How I got my buck." I remember watching an empty, dripping woods and turning my head to see the widespread 5-point walking between me and the base of a hill. He was so close that I froze until the buck's head was behind a wide tree. I snapped up the rifle, leaning it against the tree trunk next to

me. The deer's front end disappeared behind another group of trees, and I waited, watching through the scope. He re-emerged, still walking slowly. The shoulder came into the crosshairs and I squeezed.

I can still see him barreling off at the hit. I remember working the bolt in what seemed like slow motion, wondering if he was ever going to go down. Through the scope I saw him turn and race in a semi-circle back toward me, then collapse to the ground in mid-stride. The action was only seconds, but the intensity stretched it to what seemed like hours. I never took my eyes off him, never even stooped to pick up my pack, because I had to get to the deer, to know it was dead and to touch it. Only then did reality set in. It had been a heart shot.

I hope I never forget any of that. I shot the deer about 9 a.m. on opening morning, which didn't leave very long for other first day remembrances to form. But I got some anyway, unspectacular moments I can't help but recall pleasurably.

When I think of that day, what first comes to mind is sitting alongside the back road after I had dragged the buck there (downhill, fortunately) on rain-slick leaves. I had arrived a little after 10 a.m. and expected to wait two or three hours. Friends were hunting somewhere nearby, and I knew one of them would drive past me eventually. At the most, one said he would "make the rounds" at one o'clock, to pick up any deer and hunters and take them back to the house.

I remember sitting on the bank by the road, the buck pulled to the edge of the field just above me. I could turn around any time I wanted to and look at the head and the wide antlers, and that made me happy. Why not bask a little in the moment? The deer would be too soon dismantled into venison. The antlers would be cut from the skull, and the animal's lifelikeness would fade. I recall sitting comfortably, wrapped in wool beneath the raincoat as a chilly drizzle fell. A fog was on

the hills across the lake opposite me, and shots sounded now and then. I wondered lazily if any were my friends'. I remember the tart-sweet taste and citrus smell of the tangerine I peeled while I waited, the scent lingering in the damp air. I was pleasantly alone in a rare pause between the action of the hunt and the actions to be taken after the hunt, which may be why this commonplace interval was remembered.

I'm surprised by how many unspectacular moments are among the brightest baubles in my hunting memories. I don't remember much else about one deer season day, but I can still feel myself standing in the snow by an old, stone foundation, watching a half dozen dark shrews diving in and out of the snow tunnels they had made between the crumbling stones in the walls.

I remember another time, on a high ridge, when the *woo-woo-woo* of tundra swans in the low clouds suddenly took shape. The string of birds flew directly over me, nearly touching the treetops. I remember leaning back so far to watch them that I almost fell over.

I like to think, too, about the woodpecker that hammered the tree right above my head and startled me like an alarm clock, when I'd almost dozed off.

Other people I've hunted with are responsible for many of my most memorable unspectacular moments. I particularly recall walking a snowy hillside in antlerless deer season, contentedly strolling in the afterglow of having a doe already in the car. My brother, who was visiting from New Jersey and whom I rarely get to see, was somewhere ahead of me. This wasn't a planned deer drive, just a meander toward a sitting hunter, with the hope of getting something moving toward him. I found

him late in the afternoon, just as the cold blue sky was taking on a tinge of pre-sunset golds and pinks. He was sitting against a tree, rifle on his lap, looking out across the hollows to wooded crests beyond. I remember crouching next to him and finding a seat against the same tree, to share the view and wait quietly with him for quitting time. Just two people sitting against a tree for a half hour, but brother and sister hadn't had a chance to be together like that in many years.

I recollect readily the day when more than a foot of snow fell while I was deer hunting. The accumulation was noticeably deeper, by several inches, every time I got up from a stand to "sneak and peek" some more. The hemlocks seemed to resent my passing; they occasionally dumped big, soft loads of the white stuff

on by back and head when I passed beneath them.

And I can't forget the opening day of fall turkey season when a friend had a quirky "goin' turkey hunting" song playing on the tape deck, and we did a little hoe-down dance step to it when we got out of the truck.

I remember, too, the diner jukebox that had a mind of its own. You could put a quarter in and choose a song, but the machine never played the one you picked — sort of a jukebox roulette. Yet we couldn't resist putting a coin in every time we stopped there before or after hunting.

No, these aren't the exciting memories of the "mighty hunter and his trophy" that most people think would clutter a sportsman's mind. But I'm willing to bet these unspectacular moments are more numerous, as easily recalled, and just as precious in retrospect, as the times when we got to be heroes. □

*I'm surprised by
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LMO Diary

By Brad Myers

Land Management Officer
Clarion & Jefferson Counties

The arrival of thousands of seedlings to be planted on our game lands and given to our public access cooperators keeps us busy this month.

MARCH is supposed to usher in spring and bring an end to winter. Sometimes, though, I wonder about that. March brings as many wintry days as it does spring-like ones. The old saying "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb" is true. Technically, spring starts in the Northern Hemisphere with the vernal equinox, this year on the 20th of the month. On this day the sun rises directly in the east and sets directly in the west. The length of the day is exactly equal to the length of the night.

March has always been when nature seems to come back to life. Sap starts to flow in the trees, green buds appear, some wildflowers emerge and, if you spend time in the woods, you may hear a grouse drumming or even see a grouse strutting. In the wetlands you can find skunk cabbage, frog eggs, bear tracks and woodducks. Many people look for nesting bluebirds as a sign of spring.

March is a time when the food and cover crews are hurrying to finish up winter work and then get ready for the spring rush. Even though it seems like a long month, we have many loose ends to tie up, and it seems that we are never able to accomplish all the things we set out to do.

Week One

I spend the first week of the month inspecting some cuttings done by Heath Township workers and Brockway Sportsmans Club members. These guys are dedicated to habitat work, and we are

grateful to those core members who spend some of their winter weekends with a chain saw on game lands. On SGL 54 they have performed two 3-acre grouse cuts and a 17-acre browse cut for deer. I also check some of the border cutting and aspen regeneration cuts the food and cover crew has accomplished this winter. Here in my group we have portions of game lands that were long ago strip-mined, and many have grown up into aspen and spruce stands, which lends itself to grouse management. I am happy to be able to spend a couple of days with a chain saw, cutting with the crews; it's a nice break for me. I later meet up with Doug Baird and the guys from Columbia Gas to look over plans to renovate an existing gasline on SGL 63. We discuss incorporating some wildlife habitat work, and I point out a stand of sawtooth oak trees that must be protected.

I also spend time at the courthouse, researching a parcel of land in Clarion County where an old log cabin stands next to game lands. The game lands boundary seems to go right through the corner of the cabin porch. In this situation the deeds are vague and complicated, so I intend to contact real estate specialist Tom Hayden and others in our Real Estate Division in Harrisburg for help.

I finish the week by attending training at our region office in Franklin, on measuring deer fetuses to determine conception dates of does. We are doing this because soon we will be checking the

roadkilled female deer for fawns, and this is an excellent opportunity to gather biological data for deer management.

Week Two

Everett's crew is working on a border cut on SGL 31, and they are also repairing some tree tubes we installed last spring to protect seedlings from deer. The porcupines have chewed many of the wire ties, which causes the tree tubes to become airborne in a strong wind. We gather up what tubes we can find (we'll find more after the snow has melted), and reset them with steel wire on seedlings that have not been eaten by deer. Gary's crew is completing an aspen cut on SGL 72, and a release cut around a stand of sawtooth oaks on SGL 63. Sawtooth oak is raised at our Howard Nursery, and is available to landowners enrolled in our public access programs. It is a small tree that produces an unusual looking acorn loved by deer, bears and turkeys. It starts producing acorns five to 10 years after being planted, depending upon soil and weather. It will produce abundantly each year, although competing vegetation needs to be kept back so the sawtooth has plenty of daylight.

I spend this week attending a land management meeting at our region office and then a conference on pesticide use and forest health. As the week ends I meet with Representative Sam Smith, to discuss some local issues and upcoming legislation. Rep-

resentative Smith attends many of the local sportsmens club meetings in Jefferson County, and has shown a real concern for sportsmen's and environmental issues over the years.

I spend Friday at the Brookville High School, helping Gary Alt set up for a deer management presentation. We get a good turnout, and the public seems interested in his vision for the future of deer management in Pennsylvania. This is the second time I've seen his presentation, and it's exceptional. Gary adds humor and common sense, making a complicated subject easy to understand.

Week Three

This week starts out with my crew attending a training session at the Brookville Courthouse. The Jefferson County Register and Recorder, Diane Kiehl, and Chief Assessor, Mark Kessler, present a program on the process of courthouse research. The ability to conduct research is important to us, because we investigate right-of-ways, conduct land exams, law enforcement investigations and boundary disputes.

The crews this week are "frost seeding" a couple food plots. Frost seeding is the process of scattering fine seed on top of the ground in the early spring, when the ground is partially frozen in the morning and thaws in the afternoon. This freezing and thawing process will cover the fine seed and help it to germinate. The guys are frost seeding

clover seed into the food plots we planted with winter wheat last fall. As the wheat grows, it will act as a cover crop for the clover. This is an interesting way to plant, and we continue to experiment with dif-



THE CLARION COUNTY Food & Cover Crew L-R: WILLARD KLINE, maintenance; TOM DEITZ, Farm-Game manager; GARY MAXWELL, foreman.

ferent methods to improve our efficiency and food plots.

I have seen plenty of deer sign in our food plots this spring. This early green-up period is important for whitetails and other animals. Many of our food plots are planted to early varieties of orchard grass and clover, to provide as much of this early food as possible. Deer seem to use these plots most in the spring, and then again in late fall and winter.

I finish out the week by conducting a wildlife impact assessment on a local airport expansion project. I look at how the project will impact habitat and, because it's close to game lands, upon hunters.

Week Four

The crews spend this week finishing up winter cutting by releasing invading vegetation around our crabapple trees, and by topping some of our existing conifer trees. They cut the tops out of the smaller conifers in our hedgerows, small game areas, and adjacent to food plots. This causes many of the conifers to grow thicker and bushier at the bottom, in effect providing escape and winter thermal cover for small game. This also keeps the conifers from getting too tall and shading other species in the hedgerows and food plots. This technique must be repeated about every five to seven years.

This week I spend half a day with biologist Dan Brauning, looking at an area on SGL 72 where we can manage for grassland birds. Many of the reclaimed strip-mine sites have developed into habitat for grassland birds such as the Henslow's sparrow, bobolink, meadowlark, grasshopper sparrow and dickcissel.

The month ends as we finalize our annual work plans for the coming year, complete our ever-present monthly reports, prepare for spring planting, and get ready



THE JEFFERSON COUNTY Food & Cover Crew L-R: SCOTT HEPLER, maintenance; EVERETT REITZ, foreman; LEE JORDANI, Farm-Game Manager; DAVE MILLER, maintenance.

for the arrival of thousands of seedlings to be planted on our game lands and given to our public access cooperators.

This month's column marks the end of my LMO Diary; the year seems to have gone by so fast. I have enjoyed writing this column, and I think it has even improved my writing abilities. It was my hope to give you some insight into the job of a land management officer, and more importantly, to make you aware of our Food and Cover Corps and the tremendous amount of work these dedicated workers are responsible for. These folks are the ones who accomplish the habitat work you see on game lands. You don't see them much, because when you are at work, so are they. They don't work many Saturdays, don't come in contact with the public much, don't get their names in the paper much, but they are always there, behind the scenes, working for wildlife and sportsmen. I'm kind of partial, but think I have about the best crews in the state, and I'm proud of them.

My Clarion County crew consists of Gary Maxwell, foreman, a very dedicated fellow who thinks so much like I do that it's scary sometimes. Tom Deitz, the Farm-Game manager, seems to know everyone in the county by his or her first name. Willard Kline is a maintenance worker who is a hard working farmer who has a real love for his job.

The Jefferson County crew consists of

Everett Reitz, foreman, whose dedication and work ethic we all admire. Lee Jordan, Farm-Game manager, is our equipment guru; he knows more about tractors and farm equipment than anyone I know. Dave Miller, maintenance worker, is an outdoorsman who seems to know every inch of SGL 54, and Scott Hepler, maintenance worker, who is our youngest member, and our small engine specialist who sees the lighter side of things and keeps us laughing.

There is so much more I would have liked to tell you. My column has been kind of serious in nature, and it seems like I never had space to tell some of the more interesting things that happened to us this past year. Stories like the time Everett lost the bulldozer in the clearcut. The time we spent more than an hour trying to chase a groundhog out of our headquarters building. I never described the special shoes that Tom wears to paint boundary lines, the

ones that allow his toes to "breathe." We said we would not tell anyone about the day Scott fell in the creek while holding onto a bucket of white paint. I guess the column would not be complete unless I mention the day I got my truck stuck in a beaver dam and had to call for the bulldozer to get me out. It's the things that happen to us, the friends that we make, and the emotions we feel that make us love our jobs so much. I hope I have been able to clearly explain that the Game Commission puts a lot of time and money into managing game lands, that wildlife habitat management is more than just planting corn on game lands.

I hope that someday we'll meet in the field and talk about these stories, of hunting, of habitat, and of other things dear to our hearts. Until then, you can be sure that the work of the agency's Food and Cover Corps will continue for wildlife and for sportsmen. □

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Cougars are steeped in mystery and intrigue, and sightings of the big cat in Pennsylvania are often reported — and not just at Penn State.

Lion Country?

IT SEEMS as if everywhere I go I hear stories about mountain lions. Not just in Pennsylvania, but Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina and West Virginia. New England has also produced a rash of sightings. What is happening? Has the eastern mountain lion or cougar (*Puma concolor cougar*), as biologists prefer to call it, returned from the never-never land of extinction, was it never extinct in the first place, or is something else going on?

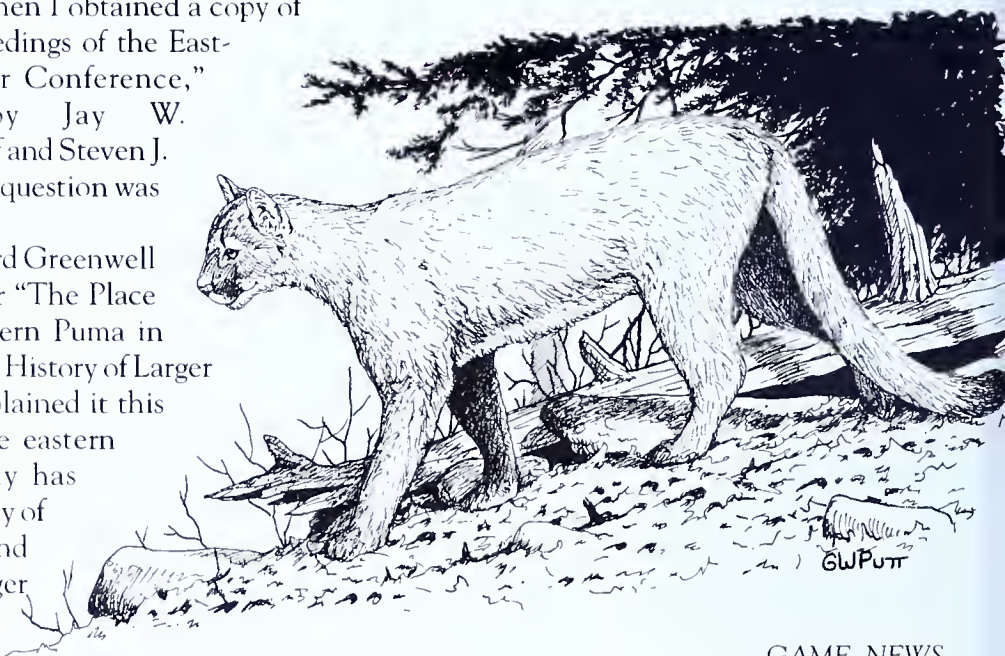
My interest in this was first piqued back in 1994 when I learned that an Eastern Cougar Conference had been held at Clarion University. How could they hold a scientific conference about an extinct animal? When I obtained a copy of the "Proceedings of the Eastern Cougar Conference," edited by Jay W. Tischendorf and Steven J. Ropski, my question was answered.

J. Richard Greenwell in his paper "The Place of the Eastern Puma in the Natural History of Larger Felids," explained it this way. "If the eastern puma really has gone the way of the dodo and the passenger

pigeon, we should ponder over why and how it happened. If it is still with us, we should ponder over how it possibly could have survived."

The eastern cougar or puma or panther or mountain lion (just a small sampling of the cougar's 40 English names) once lived from New Brunswick, Canada, south to the Carolinas and west to Illinois. Its alleged extinction occurred around the beginning of the 20th century and was attributed to the killing by humans, and the almost complete eradication of white-tailed deer, its principal prey.

Here in Pennsylvania, where the east-



ern cougar was first called Cougar de Pensilvania by the French naturalist Count Buffon in 1776, the last official wild cougar was shot in 1891. But Helen J. McGinnis's conference paper, "Reports of Pumas in Pennsylvania, 1890-1981" was of special interest to me. She collected all reports of sightings and kills of cougars in

If mountain lions do exist in Pennsylvania, they are considered a "protected mammal" under the Game and Wildlife Code. Taking may occur only as prescribed by the law (killing to protect property or for self-defense).

Pennsylvania, and after extensive research, including interviews with witnesses, decided that 325 of them were plausible. She concluded that "Pennsylvania may have a small breeding population of pumas, descended from survivors of the 19th century population, occasional escapes and releases of captives, and perhaps from immigration from Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia."

McGinnis's study ended in 1982. Since then, the number and quality of sightings have increased. By 1993 the Eastern Puma Research Network in Baltimore, Maryland, was reporting that the most cougar sightings, by far, had come from Pennsylvania, and that many included the presence of cubs. On the other hand, many professionals distrust the Network's reports because they are often based on hearsay without the vigorous follow-up scientists demand.

The Game Commission, too, is firmly convinced that whatever sightings there are consist of accidental or intentional releases of captive cougars. Jerry Hassinger, Endangered Species Coordinator for the agency, says, "Pennsylvania has some of the highest road densities in the nation, yet there are no roadkills. We have some of the highest deer hunter densities in the world, yet no cougars are reported being

shot. Currently, I have no evidence of an established cougar population. There could be releases in Pennsylvania or in surrounding states. For whatever reason, people keep cougars in captivity both legally and illegally."

Hassinger's comments make eminent sense, yet the question of cougars in the wild continued to interest me, especially after my husband Bruce and I attended a conference in West Virginia. It was focused on acid rain in Central Appalachian forests, but it also included a seminar on eastern cougars by one of my favorite writ-

ers — Chris Bolgiano. She was the author of a book I had recently read and liked called *Mountain Lion: An Unnatural History of Pumas and People*, and I remembered that her final chapter concerned the eastern cougar.

I was prepared to be skeptical. Instead, I was surprised. A young man named Todd Lester from West Virginia talked knowledgeably about tracks, scats and sightings, and he told us he was dedicating his life to following up every plausible report in the eastern United States, with the help of Bolgiano and other members of the recently formed Eastern Cougar Research Center, now renamed the Eastern Cougar Foundation (ECF). His position, and Bolgiano's, is that whether or not these animals are remnants of the wild eastern cougar population or releases doesn't matter. If they are making it in the wild on their own, they should be protected.

To that end, Bolgiano wrote a pamphlet entitled "Living With Cougars in the Appalachian Mountains" in which she summarizes a few credible sightings, discusses the cougar's biology and behavior, explains how humans should act if they see a cougar, and includes descriptions of cougar evidence such as tracks, sounds and scrapes, as well as what to look for if you do spot one and where to report it. They have also

If you wish to report a cougar sighting to Odatto, call 717-789-3549 or the ECF's 24-hour hotline at 304-664-3812. Odatto can also be reached by fax — 717-789-9206 or e-mail — odatto@pa.net. You can also call Todd Lester at 304-664-3812 or e-mail at scb1489@mail.wvnet.edu. To receive a copy of Bolgiano's brochure, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Eastern Cougar Foundation, P.O. Box 74, North Springs, West Virginia 24869. You can also subscribe to their newsletter at the same address for \$10 or read about their work on the web at www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/1318.

issued wanted posters with a drawing of a cougar and its tracks and telephone numbers you can call if you've seen one.

But other than an enthusiastic nature writer and a convinced young man, who else composes the board of directors of the Eastern Cougar Foundation? To my surprise, I recognized nearly all the names as prominent in their fields.

Robert Downing is the now retired USFWS biologist who carried out the only official field study of eastern cougars in the 1980s. For three years he and his wife searched for cougar tracks in the snow, maintained scent stations attractive to cougars in remote areas, and followed many promising leads in the southern Appalachians, but they found no concrete evidence of an eastern cougar population. According to Bolgiano in her book, Downing "ranked the elusiveness of cougars high on his list of searching problems."

Dr. David S. Maehr was the director of field research for the Florida Panther Project for nine years, and is now a conservation biologist at the University of Kentucky. I recognized his name from his portrayal both in Bolgiano's book and in Chuck Fergus's, *Swamp Screamer: At Large with the Florida Panther*. In both books Maehr struck me as driven, sincere and

committed to the protection of the Florida panther. Having radio-tagged and followed them through the Big Cypress Preserve for nine years, he knew, I had no doubt, a panther, or panther sign, when he saw it.

Other members include Mark Jenkins of West Virginia, who runs the Cooper's Rock Mountain Lion Sanctuary for captive cougars that have been abused or neglected; Dr. Donald W. Linzey, in the biology department of Wytheville Community College in Virginia, who has been documenting cougars in Virginia since 1978 and is the author of *Mammals of Virginia*; and Susan Morse of Vermont, a professional forester who has worked with and tracked mountain lions in the western United States.

Two Pennsylvanians are on the board — Dr. Jay Tischendorf, a veterinarian who once worked on the Hornocker Institute's Yellowstone Cougar Study and who organized the Eastern Cougar Conference, and Thomas Linzey, the son of Donald, who lives in Shippensburg where he practices environmental law.

Finally, Dr. Melanie Culver of Virginia, whose recent Ph.D dissertation reported on her 4-year analysis of DNA from the 32 subspecies of cougars. Completed under Dr. Stephen O'Brien of the University of Maryland, an internationally known feline geneticist at the Laboratory of Genomic Diversity of the National Cancer Institute, Culver concluded that there are only six subspecies of cougars in this hemisphere. All temperate North American cougars north of Nicaragua are a single subspecies that should be called (*Puma concolor couguar*), the present name of the eastern cougar subspecies. She is saying, in essence, that the eastern cougar never went extinct because it is the same subspecies as those still thriving in the western United States, Mexico and Central America, as well as the beleaguered Florida panther.

Her conclusion suits me because it means that the cougar screaming I heard while camped in a remote park in British

Columbia was made by the same subspecies that once lived in Pennsylvania. But no doubt Culver's taxonomic conclusion will cause a crisis in the world of mammalogists and conservationists.

Impressed by the quality of the board of the ECF, I also approve of their goals, which are: "To scientifically document the existence of wild, reproducing cougars in the eastern United States, to assure official protection for all such cougars, and to build acceptance of wild cougars in the rural east through educational outreach." Furthermore, they emphasize that they are not interested in reintroducing cougars to the eastern United States.

So, have they delivered the goods yet? Chris Bolgiano says she has at least 10 incidents of confirmed field evidence such as scat, a cougar body, tracks or video and is waiting for written documentation on two more by an ECF board member who confirmed some tracks and a video in North Carolina. By the time you read this column, she will have presented her evidence at the Sixth Mountain Lion Conference, in San Antonio in December 2000. Her confirmations include scat in Ontario and New Brunswick, Canada, Vermont and Massachusetts, home videos of one in western Maryland, and tracks in West Virginia. Another cougar was treed and killed by raccoon hunters in Missouri in 1994, and a train in southern Illinois hit another in July 2000.

In Pennsylvania, Gene Odato, Chief of the Rural and Community Forestry Section for Pennsylvania's DCNR, has been coordinating efforts to track down every suspected cougar sighting or evidence and reporting them to the ECF, which does fol-

low-up work. So far, they have not positively documented any wild cougars in Pennsylvania, although the latest sighting, in the Seven Mountains of central Pennsylvania, sounds plausible.

Then, there is the Delaware cougar or cougars that have been roaming the White Clay Creek Valley and its environs for several years, using culvert pipes to cross busy

highways in this heavily populated area. According to my Delaware friend, Dorothy Miller, sightings began in the winter of 1995-96. Videos of a cougar in a backyard were shown on Philadelphia area television many times. It was tracked, although never seen or photographed, throughout the winter as it left deer carcasses in its wake.

Other sightings in the area continued off and on until 1998 when a biologist spotted it on the Delaware side of the White Clay Creek Preserve, which

Pennsylvania shares with Delaware. In 2000 the reports in New Castle County, Delaware, mounted to five by late June. It seemed only a matter of time until that cougar crossed into Pennsylvania.

And on August 7 it did. According to Kevin Housel, an employee of the United States Geological Service who was doing geological survey work in the preserve, "I came up over a rise and saw it for only about five seconds. It went down on its haunches when it saw the truck, then it tore off. I saw a 3-foot tail at the end of its body and it appeared in good health." Housel knew enough to look for tracks but couldn't find any because the ground was dry.

Both Odato and Bolgiano think the Delaware cougar or cougars (if Housel's cougar is only three years old, it couldn't be the one spotted in 1995-96) are prob-



ably released captives. But there is no doubt that they and other cougars spotted in the East are able to make a living, even in a suburban area, because of our high deer population.

Jamie Clark, head of the USFWS, in answer to a letter from the ECF recently wrote, "We acknowledge that occasional sightings of cougars have been reported, and that some animals have been recovered, but none of these animals has shown any evidence of belonging to a remnant, wild, breeding population of eastern cougars. Therefore, the Service's position remains that the eastern cougar is extir-

pated." Not if Melanie Culver's dissertation conclusions are accepted by mammalogists. That will open a whole new can of worms, including the status of the federally endangered Florida panther.

For the time being, however, my mind is open. I'll continue to monitor the work of the ECF. And to keep hoping that the "ghost cat" called "lord of the forest" by the Cherokee, "greatest of wild hunters" by the Cree, and "cat of God" by the Chickasaw, and whose face was carved on many stone and clay-fired pipes by our Eastern woodland Native Americans, is still out there. After all, I live in Lion Country. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Want a Taste?

Read the following clues to identify the trees, then copy the misplaced capital letters and unscramble, if necessary, to name correctly.

I have greeniSh bArk, and my rootS and young brancheS can be Added to water and boiled into a spicy drink. My FlavoR is similAr to Sarsaparilla.

My SyrUp is sold commercially, and my sap Gives a delightful tAste. The thickeR My sAP becomes by boiLing, the sweEter I become. It takes 30-40 gallons of my sap to make one gallon of syrup.

My Bark resemblEs thAt of wild Cherry, but a whiff of a broKeN twig identifies me. My Bark Is easily peeled. Tasting like Root beer, I'm a good CHoice for a spring drink.

Containing rich amounts of vitamin C and A, all mEmbers of my faMily are considered one of the best wiLd edibles in the wOrld. PiCK one of my tender needles and try me this spring.

answers on p. 64

Experience is the best teacher, and mistakes, although sometimes harsh lessons, should enable the bowhunter to wise up in a hurry.

The Education of a Bowhunter

WHILE MOST of my hunting buddies began hunting at 12, I didn't begin until my early 20s. Sure, my dad and brothers did their share of fishing with me, but there was absolutely no hunting tradition in my family. It wasn't until I started teaching at a rural high school here in southeastern Pennsylvania that I was befriended by some teachers who had come from up-state where hunting traditions run deep.

Listening to my colleagues weave their tales of hunting adventures was seductive, and when one of them invited me to go pheasant hunting, I purchased my first hunting license. That was in the early '70s, and while I had some success hunting wild pheasants in the few years just before the ringneck's precipitous decline, it was my first attempt at deer hunting that converted me into a diehard.

On opening morning of buck season that year I filled my tag on a Fulton County forkhorn. I field-dressed it myself, following a diagram I had ripped out of an old *Field and Stream*. I was so taken by the adventure of it all — a sense of the "quest" that I've yet to find in anything else — and a feeling of success and fulfillment, that I became a deer hunter for life that damp and dreary December morning.



BECAUSE bowhunting usually involves hunting from treestands, a mistake here could be fatal. Never ascend, hunt from, or descend a tree without a safety harness secured.

Over the next few years my buck hunting success continued, and like so many other deer hunters, I sought a greater challenge, along with a way to spend more time

in the woods. Bowhunting was the obvious answer to both. I read every book and magazine I could get my hands on about bowhunting, and I talked with as many experienced bowhunters as I could, but over the years I've discovered that experience is the best teacher. And the way to learn is from your own mistakes. Here's a sample of what nearly 30 years of bowhunting (and my fair share of mistakes) has taught me.

Equipment Matters

During my formative years of bowhunting, I carried a recurve and shot with my fingers. Despite many hours of practice, my accuracy was often suspect, and I never did take a shot at a deer with that set-up. Then when the compound was introduced, it ushered in a whole new bowhunting renaissance. I bought my first compound, a 2-wheeled Martin Cougar, and while I continued to shoot fingers, both my accuracy and consistency improved significantly. I took my first buck with that bow.

As archery equipment got more sophisticated, so did I. Eventually I graduated to a mechanical release, which brought about a quantum leap in my accuracy. I also began using more refined sights. When I began to get competitive at 3-D shoots, I started using a peep sight, but have since abandoned it. Under shadowy or low-light

conditions, I decided that the peep sight was more of a hindrance than a help. The kissier button provided a sufficiently consistent anchor for me without introducing the aiming problems inherent in a peep sight in low light. I've also switched to lighter-weight broadheads (from 125 to 100 grains).

Two years ago I made the move to carbon arrows. With my current set-up, I can consistently hit my aiming point out to 40 yards (although I generally restrict myself to shots less than 30 yards). I've come to believe that you owe it to the deer to always make the cleanest shot possible. To me that means using the most sophisticated and efficient equipment available.

Of course, not everyone shares that view. A growing number of bowhunters have returned to their archery roots, forsaking state-of-the-art technology for recurves or even longbows, as they seek to revive a more traditional approach to bowhunting. I suspect that that's not a turn my own bowhunting career will soon take. I will continue to take advantage of the latest in archery technology. Ultimately, the choice between technology and tradition is a personal one.

In the last decade or so, I've gone through my share of bows. My current favorite is a High Country Four Runner with a single weighted cam set at 70 pounds. In the last two years my current set-up has accounted for four bucks (two here in Pennsylvania and two last year in Maryland).

Know Your Territory

It's been said that it takes at least three years to become familiar with a new hunting area and to pattern the deer that inhabit it. My experience tells me that that is probably

TECHNIQUES such as rattling can often work wonders in calling in deer, but as often as not, they can be totally ineffective.



an accurate assessment, but it really comes down to time spent in the woods. Once you figure out your local whitetails' bedding and feeding tendencies, become familiar with topography, terrain and vegetation, visually track deer movements and preferred travel routes, times and directions, and determine the best possible stand placements, your chances of success skyrocket. It's all a matter of time and observation.

You also need to be vigilant about change and the effect it can have on "your" deer. In one woodlot I had experienced success for three consecutive years on nice bucks, ambushing each of them in the evening as they made their way from their bedding areas to feed. That streak ended in the fourth year. While I stubbornly hunted the same stand for weeks, the deer just weren't using the same travel routes. I eventually discovered why. The neighboring cornfield, their preferred feeding area for the past few years, had been converted into a housing development, and the deer had changed their patterns accordingly.

Even minor changes can alter patterns. Something as simple as another archer hunting the same area can disrupt deer movements and impact on your success, particularly if that hunter is careless in his hunting habits. The lesson here is to know your hunting territory, but be willing to adjust your tactics.

What Works For Me May Not Work For You

To a great extent I believe bowhunters are creatures of habit, habits developed over the years from trial and error. You find out what works for you and you tend to stick with it, which is not to say that all of us aren't willing to experiment with new techniques or accessories that might give us that extra edge.

In bowhunting circles there are at least three areas that have received tons of at-



IT TAKES a lot of time and effort scouting and hunting in a particular area to determine deer patterns and travel routes.

tention and refinement over the past years: treestands, scents and calling.

For many years I built and hunted from permanent treestands where I had permission to hunt on private property. I never killed a deer from one of those, though. I believe that my stands were built too low, probably just 10 to 12 feet off the ground — and the deer became aware of the locations and avoided them like the proverbial plague. When I bought my first portable climbing stand — a rather primitive one by today's standards — I began hunting a little higher, and started seeing far more deer within bow range. That's also when I started killing bucks.

Today I've learned not to rely on one stand, and in fact I now have six different hanging stands spread out over three different properties. All are tucked neatly among branches and backgrounds that help to break up my outline. I also have a new climbing stand that I often use as well, but because climbers require branchless tree trunks, such as those provided by tulip poplars, it's tough to achieve the outline break-up offered by hanging stands. As a result, I tend to hunt a little higher when using my climber.

As for scents, I'm a great believer in masking scents, and I use massive quantities of raccoon urine. In my earlier years I used skunk scent (a big mistake) and fox

urine before settling for raccoon.

For me at least, sex scents and lures are another matter. While I know plenty of other bowhunters who swear by them, and apparently enjoy great success with these lures and other applications such as mock scrapes, I can recall only one time where it appeared that the scent trail I had laid down actually lured in a buck. As a result, I still use these lures in the course of a season, but never with any real sense of confidence.

On the other hand, I've had great success with vocalizations as a way of enticing deer within range. I've called in dozens of bucks with grunt calls, doe bleats and rattling. The biggest Pennsylvania buck I've taken fell to a combination of grunting and antler rattling — very modest applications of each, I might add. Although I've found grunting to be an effective way to bring bucks within range, experience has shown me that it fails to work as often as not. Some of the biggest-racked bucks I've crossed paths with seemed oblivious to my best calling efforts. In most cases, these were mature bucks deep into the rut with definite destinations in mind as they traveled to check their next scrape or stayed on the trail of a receptive doe. They were not about to be deterred by anything, certainly not a few plaintive notes on a grunt call.

While grunt calls remain one of the most effective tools in a bowhunter's arsenal, I have to wonder if the proliferation of so many calls on the market — and the overuse or misuse of these calls by archers — will eventually render this technique ineffective. Some western outfitters say that elk have wised up to hunters using bugles and other elk calling techniques. That could happen here with grunt calls — at least with the most savvy mature bucks. Younger bucks, however, will probably always remain susceptible.

Know What Not To Do

Never try to use a portable climbing

stand after a rain, particularly on a smooth-barked tree. I tried it one opening day many years ago. I believe the drag marks from my fingernails still scar the trunk of that particular yellow poplar.

Never ascend, descend or hunt from a treestand without using a safety harness. I've fallen from treestands twice. The first time was from 10 feet without a safety belt. I hit the ground with a thud, but was extremely fortunate that the fall only knocked the wind out of me. The second time I slipped from a stand I was wearing a harness — a precaution that I'm sure saved my life that day — and quickly managed to scramble back into the stand.

Never shoot at a running deer. Sure, I've seen some spectacular lucky shots on hunting videos, but the odds of wounding the animal are far greater. I limit my shots to standing deer.

Never Forget Why You're Out There

When I was younger I used to think that if I didn't fill my buck tag, the season had been a failure. I was ready to take the first antlered deer that came into range, and I usually did. But as I got older, I started getting more selective, passing up bucks I would have arrowed without a second thought even just a few years ago. I eventually realized that my real priority out there is not to kill, but to hunt. I did tag an 8-point last season, but only after I'd passed on four or five smaller bucks. Then on a hunt in Maryland in November, I watched as a huge buck fed under my stand. His unusual rack sported four large points on the left, but a weird aberration of a fork on the right. It was the first morning of the hunt, so I let him pass. When my hunt ended two days later, I still hadn't filled a tag, but I really didn't care. I had finally learned the most important lesson of all. Hunting is just that: hunting, and not just filling tags. I guess the most important lesson I've learned about bowhunting is this: In the final analysis, hunting with a bow is not about the kill, it's about the quest. □

The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

It's doubtful that Billy the Kid would have referred to his 41-caliber double action Remington he was known to carry as a handgun, but no matter, it's all just nomenclature.

A Look at "One-Hand" Guns

Helen Lewis



AUTHOR'S SON, Tim Lewis, fires cast bullets in his Ruger Redhawk .44 Magnum. Using scrap lead, the cost of a bullet is practically zero.

I'M SURE many readers wonder why I stuck the word "one" in the title of this column. Why not just call these guns handguns and leave it at that? Well, knowledgeable one-hand gun shooters have informed me that there is no such thing as a handgun. The correct term is pistol. According to one historian, the term handgun is relatively new. He said dictionaries more than 60 years old do not carry the term. He went on to say that modern dictionaries define

handgun and pistol as "any small gun fired with one hand."

Over the years I've called the single-shot and autoloading hand-held guns pistols. This more or less distinguished them from revolvers. However, the term handgun is commonly used for both types of hand-held firearms.

I don't want to get involved too much in medieval history, but prior to the arquebus there was a hand-held small bore canon called a hand canon or handgun. As I understand it, the shooter rested it against his shoulder and a companion steadied the muzzle. Who applied the fire to the touchhole is not clear.

I did look up both handgun and pistol in two dictionaries. A 1939 dictionary did not have handgun, but a 1970 version shows both terms and defined each as a "small gun fired with one hand." The later dictionary also said a pistol is "such a firearm where the chamber is part of the barrel: distinguished from a revolver."

By now, I suspect handgunners are chomping at the bit over these revelations. I'm not trying to incite a riot; I'm simply

stating what several researchers have told me. I'm sure the term handgun is not going to disappear any more than the phrase "pair of binoculars" will leave the scene. (For those who wonder why I brought up a "pair of binoculars," it's simply because there is no such thing unless you have a binocular in each hand. A binocular is a pair of oculars.)

In the early 1400s, multi-barreled handguns were in production. One type was called a "duckfoot pistol," because numerous barrels fanned out from a common center. While it was fearsome in appearance and should have been a formidable weapon for use against mobs, as the projectiles spread out over a large area in front of the shooter, it had a built-in problem of misfiring. It didn't survive very long.

It's worth noting that over the years many styles of multi-barreled pistols have appeared, including Remington's double derringer that was introduced in 1866 and stayed in production until 1935.

I don't want to get wrapped up in handgun history, but I do want to mention Colt's Paterson model, which arrived around 1836. It didn't generate much enthusiasm, however, and Colt was on the verge of dropping it, but then fate intervened. The compact sidearm was being used on the western frontier. Such a gun had a distinct advantage for horsemen in a running firefight with robbers or Indians. Finally, the military (due to the Mexican War) forced the issue.

The Texas Rangers, many of whom were carrying Colts, motivated the military to take a second look at the revolver, and Captain Samuel Walker was sent to Colt to persuade him to build a bigger and more powerful percussion revolver. Walker was successful in encouraging Colt to stay in business, and contributed to the design of a gun that would be known as the "Walker" Colt. It's well known that the Walker Colt definitely proved the value of the compact handheld firearm, and the United States became the first nation in history to issue

a revolver to its troops. This move also established the revolver as a viable weapon.

Compared to a rifle, a handgun is much more difficult to shoot accurately. The transition from a rifle to a handgun is not a matter of one or two practice sessions. It takes plenty of time. I have always thought that top pistol shooters were a breed of their own. It doesn't hurt to have strong hands, but the size of the hands or wrists will not make or break a pistol shooter. The way a handgun is held will. This means that the grips should fit the hand properly, and it's wise to practice adapting your hand to the grip. Practice with an empty handgun by pushing the grip hard into the "V" between the thumb and four fingers. While still pushing the grip firmly into the V, wrap your thumb and fingers around the grip.

This is not a one-session affair, and it's basically accomplished by trial and error. The ultimate goal is to have a firm hold high on the grip with the first joint of the shooting finger comfortably against the trigger. The three fingers should be wrapped around the butt, and the thumb should rest against the frame but have enough freedom to cock the hammer. To get the proper feel, the hammer should be cocked (with the gun empty).

Holding a handheld gun properly is to some extent a personal or individual matter. Even advice from a qualified handgun instructor may not work for you. It's fair to say that the paramount goal is to hold the handgun the same for each shot. If a handgun is canted, it will shoot low or wide, just as a rifle will.

Super magnums should be held with two hands. Wrap the non-shooting hand around the shooting hand for support. Don't cover the cylinder with the non-shooting hand because tiny slivers of lead can be blown out of the cylinder gap. A further word of caution on this is to remember these slivers can fly several yards with enough force to cut the skin. I've mentioned before about shooting a handgun at a rat eating at a pig trough. My late

father-in-law, Darrel Nulph, was at least five feet from me, but directly off to the side of the cylinder. I missed the rat, but he calmly informed me I had drawn blood — his. A tiny sliver of lead was imbedded in his face.

The handgun is a little like a friendly barking dog, as its bark is worse than its bite. The shooter's psychological side takes over while pulling the trigger. Even veterans admit that the roar of a handgun sometimes bothers them. A lot of handgunners have a tendency to hurry the shot just to get it over with. That also holds true with powerful magnum rifles. I've actually seen shooters close their eyes while pulling the trigger. In all fairness, they didn't do this on purpose; it's just the way our minds play tricks on us. When I was shooting a hefty load of 4831 powder out of a .378 Weatherby Magnum, my friend claimed that after firing more than 20 rounds during a range test, I started closing my eyes. I didn't believe him, but I'm only human, and the big Weatherby has a pretty stiff backward thrust.

There's no argument that the magnum handgun is powerful, but sometimes I feel too much emphasis is put on power. I'm talking of conventional magnum cartridges, such as the .357, .41 and .44. Some handheld guns fire regular rifle cartridges.

I watched Dr. George Dvorchak, who is a super handgun shot, shoot 3-shot 100-yard groups with a scoped Lone Eagle chambered for the 7mm-08 Remington rifle cartridge. With that handgun, I'm sure he could drop a deer at 200 yards. I do not consider handguns chambered for rifle cartridges as "conventional" handguns, but that's just my opinion.

There is a rather heated controversy over which handgun cartridge is adequate for white-tailed deer and black bears. Fans of the .38 Special and .357 Magnum claim either cartridge is adequate. On the other hand, users of the larger and more powerful magnums take a different view. From a pure ballistic viewpoint, the .38 Special



Helen Lewis

ROSEMARIE DVORCHAK firing a .357 Remington Max Contender with a 10-inch barrel and topped with a Weaver Qwik Point sight.

and .357 Magnum fall short. I know several big game hunters who have been successful with the .357, but the shots were close enough to allow precise bullet placement. It seems reasonable to stick with cartridges such as the .41 or .44 Magnum, because both cartridges offer ballistics more suited for deer and bears.

Becoming a competent handgun shot is a long and difficult process. It requires patience and a lot of practice. It's best to start with a 22-caliber and work up through the ranks. My son Tim is not a bad handgun shot, but he has burned a lot of ammo shooting at paper targets. Several years ago he used a Ruger Redhawk .44 Magnum topped with an Aimpoint scope to drop a walking buck at about 30 yards. It was a one-shot kill, but it came as a result of many hundreds of practice shots.

On top of the satisfaction of becoming proficient, handgun shooting can also lead to other interesting hobbies, such as bullet swaging and casting. There's a sense of satisfaction in using your own bullets, and when a handgunner stands over the first deer taken with bullets he or she made, there's bound to be a feeling of total commitment. Finally, if you do get into handgun hunting, take it seriously, as it's strictly for the dedicated. □

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

Between 1990 and 1997, women's participation in sporting clays increased by 112 percent (from 216,000 in 1990 to 458,000 in 1997).

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is proposing to upgrade the gray wolf from endangered to threatened in Wisconsin and Michigan. There is an estimated 248 wolves in Wisconsin.

Hunters in Oklahoma set a new deer harvest record in 1999, taking 82,724 deer. The harvest represents the state's 15th record deer harvest in 18 years.

A Kenya newspaper claims a group of monkeys killed a human by throwing rocks while he was watering cattle at a waterhole.

The top five states in terms of total duck harvest in 1998 were: Louisiana, 2.6 million; Texas, 1.6 million; California, 1.4 million; Arkansas, 1.4 million; and Minnesota, 683,000.

Three grizzly bears were shot last spring in Wyoming by hunters mistaking them for black bears.

An Iowa conservationist designed the first federal waterfowl stamp in 1934. The \$1 stamp sales generated \$635,000 nationwide.

In 1938 Ohio hunters were first required to wear their hunting licenses displayed on their backs. The law remained unchanged for 60 years.

There were a record 63 bald eagle nests with a record 89 young in Ohio last spring.

Women who hunt with firearms have increased 15 percent (from 1,752,000 in 1989 to 2,018,000 in 1997). Women today represent nearly 11 percent of the overall hunting population.

A national survey found that 43 percent of hunters hunt for recreation, 25 percent for meat, and 21 percent to be close to nature.

Hunters in New Hampshire took 499 bears — a state record — in 1999. There is an estimated 4,000 bears in the state.

Following overwhelming support for the creation of a dove hunting season in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board last spring voted five to two in favor of a season that should begin in September 2001.

Hunters in North Dakota took 258,335 pheasants in 1999 — up from 219,873 in 1998. Kill per hunter increased from 3.8 to 4.3 birds.

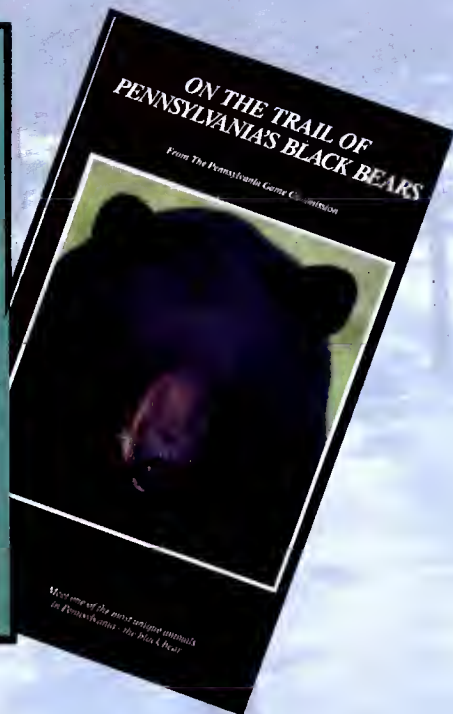
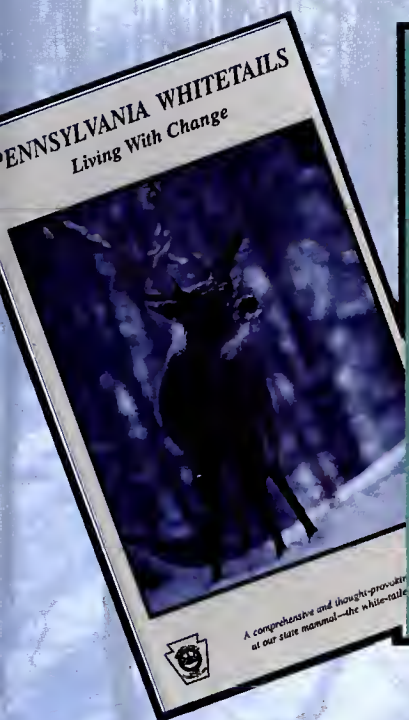
Of the 17 hunting incidents recorded in Maryland during the 1999-2000 season, seven resulted from falls out of treestands.

Answers: Sassafras, Sugar maple, Black birch, Hemlock.

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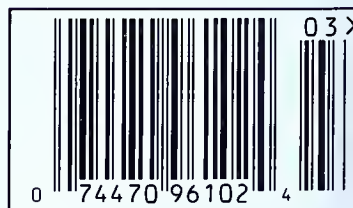


Stamp shown actual size

Purchasing Wildlife Conservation Stamps, only \$3 each, is an easy way for people — hunters and nonhunters, young and old — to help the Game Commission buy and manage land for wildlife.

To get youngsters and others involved in "Lands for Wildlife," school groups, sportsmen's clubs and other conservation organizations may sell the stamps and keep \$1.50 from each stamp sold. After they've sold 2,000 stamps, participating groups get to keep \$1.75 from each stamp sold.

For further information on participating in this program or to buy stamps, write the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Dept. M5, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797, or call 888-888-3459.



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APRIL, 2001

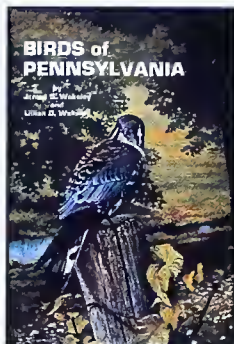
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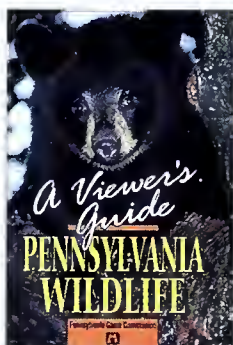
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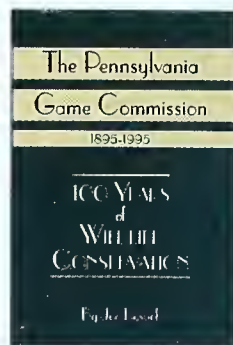
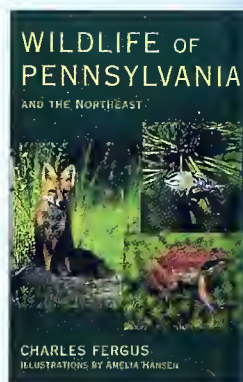
Birds of Pennsylvania, a 214-page hardcover by James and Lillian Wakeley, details birds most commonly found here, plus information on their biology and behavior.
Price: \$12.26

Gone for the Day is a compilation of Game News columns written and illustrated by famed wildlife artist and naturalist, the late Ned Smith.
Price: \$5.66



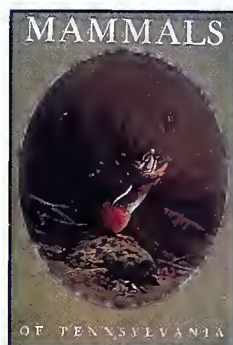
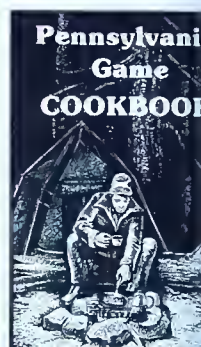
Pennsylvania Wildlife: A Viewer's Guide, by Kathy and Hal Korber, features 93 sites noted for their wildlife viewing potential. Directions, maps and photos included.
Price: \$12.26

Wildlife of Pennsylvania and the Northeast, by Chuck Fergus blends solid scientific information with his own anecdotes. Covers birds and mammals, along with reptiles, amphibians and fish, 438 pages.
Price: \$19.95



Pennsylvania Game Commission: 1895-1995 by Joe Kosack, covers the agency's first 100 years and includes more than 60 historical photographs.
Price: \$12.26

Pennsylvania Game Cookbook is a collection of nearly 200 recipes for popular, and not so popular, game animals.
Price: \$4.71



Mammals of Pennsylvania, by J. Kenneth Doult et al. profiles the state's mammals and their roles in the state's history.
Price: \$9.43

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Popular Changes

FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS I've gone deer hunting in Greene County (where I grew up), and every year I've bought a second antlerless deer license. This past year, I was astounded that Greene County sold out, because it hadn't sold out in the two previous years (1998 and '99), when it was one of only the dozen or so counties where hunters could obtain second antlerless deer licenses. With last year's "private land" licenses available in just about every county, I figured the demand for them in Greene and other Southwest counties would be less. Well, I was wrong. In 1998 and '99, license sales for Greene County were 15,778 and 16,979; while in 2000, the entire allocation of 17,250 was sold.

The jump in antlerless license sales can likely be attributed largely to the Saturday "doe" season opener and that Junior and Senior hunters could take antlerless deer throughout the 2-week antlered deer season. In that regard, last year's season structure seems to have done exactly what it was intended to do: provide deer hunting opportunities to more people and improve deer management through better utilization of antlerless deer licenses.

For the upcoming seasons, at the April 9-10 meeting the Board of Commissioners will consider even more antlerless deer season changes: An archery season that begins in mid-September and runs through early November; a 3-day season in October for Junior, Senior, disabled and muzzleloader hunters; a regular firearms season that opens on the Saturday before "buck" season and runs throughout the 2-week antlered season; and a late archery season that begins the Monday after buck season and runs through mid-January. Furthermore, as it's proposed, hunters will be allowed to apply for two additional antlerless deer licenses — for a total of three — where they're still available. (The 2001 antlerless license allocations will be set at the April meeting.)

To monitor these and other deer hunting changes, several research projects about breeding behavior, fawn mortality, and the effects of age and habitat on antler size have been started. Based on data WCOs and deputies collected from 608 female deer killed on roads last winter and spring, we've learned that in Pennsylvania the rut runs from September into February, with 90 percent of the breeding taking place from mid-October through mid-December, peaking November 17. In turn, fawns are being born from the end of March until September, with 90 percent in May and June. Average birth date was June 2. Preliminary findings of the fawn survival study begin on page 34.

It's Dr. Gary Alt's goal to make Pennsylvania a leader in white-tailed deer research and management. In the last 18 months, Alt presented more than 120 lectures on deer management, averaging more than 800 attendees at each. As anybody who attended will attest, a very convincing argument can be made that the deer population needs to be brought in line with what the habitat can support. This year's proposed deer season structure is another step toward accomplishing those goals.

While it remains to be seen just what the Board of Commissioners approves in April, substantial deer hunting changes are in the works. And as last year's antlerless deer license sales show, many hunters are welcoming the change. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

In the January issue there was a Field Note by WCO Jim Trombetto that had to do with an archer falling out of a tree when his treestand collapsed. I feel the WCO should have waited for the hunter to come out of the woods to check his license, rather than disrupt his hunt and the area around his treestand.

A. DOMINIANI
MILLERSTOWN

Officers don't normally disrupt hunters afield during routine license checks, unless there are extenuating circumstances. In this instance, WCO Trombetto had just cited the individual's son for hunting over bait and, as it turned out, went on to cite the hunter who fell out of the treestand for hunting over bait and for trying to use his wife's antlerless deer license.

Editor:

Thank you for the change in regulations that allow people serving in active military duty to take either antlered or antlerless deer during the antlered deer season. We really appreciate it.

Thanks again, and keep up the good work

E. FORSYTHE
US NAVY

Editor:

I've been receiving *Game News* for more than 35 years, even though I have not lived in PA for longer than that. Field Notes, of course, are great, as are the columns by Linda Steiner, Marcia Bonta

Where time really does stand still

I know of a place where time really does stand still. A place where I am forever young. A place where my memory never fails me. Things that happened there 20 years ago seem as if they were only yesterday. This place is probably not unique to those who have experienced this strange phenomenon. This place is just another nameless mountain, or valley, or creek bottom, or farm. The only thing that sets these places apart from any other is that these are the places where we do our hunting.

As one more beautiful sunset signaled the end of another deer season, I could not help thinking of how my life has changed in the last 23 years. Graduations, military service, a wife, and children of my own. Different houses and different jobs. So many changes, but on that mountain time stands still.

The mountain where I hunt has not changed in the 20 some odd years I have gone there. It looks the same as it did when I set out on that first adventure. I was just a boy then, walking in my father's footsteps, unsure of what the day would bring. And now, although I don't need to walk in his footsteps anymore, sometimes I still do. And just as it was then, the outcome of any day is still uncertain. Over the years we have faced cold and snow, wind and rain, we have met with success and disappointment. But most of all we have enjoyed the time we have spent together. On that mountain, he's my dad and I'm his son, just like it was then. Time really has stood still.

ROBERT S. HOLDEN,
MADERA

and Bob Sopchick.

Please extend my subscription for another three years.

F.D. OPPERMAN
BOZEMAN, MT

Editor:

The addition of "LMO Diary" by Brad Myers has been fantastic. It's been very informative and I have a new appreciation for all that the Land Management Bureau performs.

Thank you and keep up the great work.

B. GOSSER,
GREENVILLE

Editor:

Just a note to go with my renewal. Sometimes I feel the magazine is getting away from news about game. I suggest you keep to subjects that hunters enjoy, namely game animals.

S. L. CORL
HUNTINGDON

**Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters,"
2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.
Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.**

“Like an ‘electric rainbow’ the northern lights danced from one end of the sky to the other, as I stood in awe.”

Off to Manitoba

Mark A. Allegro
Crawford County WCO

EVERY YEAR at the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association (NAWEOA) conference two names are drawn, one from all American officers and one from the Canadian officers. The two selected are then allowed to choose, in the other country, any state or province where they would like to work for about a week with a host officer. With around 500 officers attending, I never gave much thought to which province I would like to visit, so imagine my surprise when after my name was drawn, within minutes everyone was asking where I wanted to go. Before the evening was over, with a primary goal of seeing a polar bear, I made arrangements with Earl Simmons, a Natural Resource Officer from Manitoba, to go there in mid-September.

When I left Meadville, on September 8, it was sunny and around 60 degrees, almost the identical conditions I would find upon my return eight days later. Little did I know how drastically different the weather would be in between. Arriving in Thompson, Manitoba, I was met by Resource Officer Geoff Smith, who took me to a nearby hotel.



WCO MARK ALLEGRO, right, with pilot DAVE SENGER. During the NAWEOA officer exchange trip the two flew approximately 3,000 miles throughout northern Manitoba.

The next morning, as we left for the region office, Geoff informed me that cold, rain and snow were being forecast for the week. After giving me a tour of the office and introducing me to the staff, Geoff showed me around Thompson. Around noon, Earl Simmons reported that the weather was beginning to clear and that we should be able to fly to Lynn Lake. After receiving clearance to fly (it was still cold and windy with a bit of rain), I was taken to the dock for my flight. The office

informed me that both the government owned Otter, a float plane, and the contracted Bell 206 helicopter would be making the trip, and that I could go on either one. It was suggested that as I would be spending most of the week flying in the chopper, I should take this opportunity to ride in the Otter — an experience in itself, I was told.

After loading our gear, our plane taxied out onto the lake. Steering into the wind, “Hap” Bednarek cranked the throttle, and after skimming across the wave tops, we had lift off.

Our flight was a bit more than an hour, covering around 130 miles, and it was the first of what turned out to be many memorable flights I would take in Manitoba. With 30 year’s experience, Hap had the appearance of just what I had always imagined a bush pilot to look like, and the Otter was older than me (it was built in 1956). Manitoba is known as the “Land of 100,000 Lakes,” and from what I saw, that was probably a good guess. Other than water, the land was covered with dense stands of black and white spruce, tamarack and aspens.

After landing in Lynn Lake, we were met by officers Earl Simmons and Warren Toderan, and I was told that we would be spending the next few days in a government owned camp up north, working caribou hunters. After a brief tour of Lynn Lake and the district office, and loading the Otter and chopper with supplies, Hap and Warren boarded the bush plane while Dave, the chopper pilot, Earl and I climbed into the chopper. On our 2-hour 20-minute, 200-mile journey to Croll Lake, I was struck by the true vastness of this country. We saw literally no evidence of civilization, just hundreds of miles of lakes, spruce and tamarack trees. And the farther north we flew, the less vegetation we encountered. The terrain turned to sub-arctic, with lichen-covered sandy ground sprinkled with small shrubs and spruce trees. When we landed at our lodge, the cold temperature and biting, 30-to 40-mile

per hour winds reminded me that we had definitely traveled north. One of my first sights was of the overturned outhouse and the bear claw marks on the front door to the small, rustic 2-room camp.

My first real impression of the beauty of this area was when we walked outside the camp after dinner. It was dark and, yes, very cold. But the sight of the orange harvest moon, its light glimmering across the lake, the stars, the surreal silence and the sight of my first truly spectacular display of the Northern Lights made me wonder how anyone could doubt the existence of God. I could hardly imagine that barely more than 24 hours earlier and thousands of miles away, I was driving through Cleveland and into its crowded airport. I had a feeling of how the astronauts must feel being so isolated from civilization, with the companionship of only a few other people to share the sights.

Words do no justice to the Northern Lights display the five of us witnessed that evening. The colorful lights in the heavens, constantly changing as if someone were holding the end of a rainbow and pulling it slowly in varying directions across the sky, was awesome. After about 15 minutes, the lights faded and then disappeared, ending the show as innocently as it began. Returning to the warmth of the cabin, we socialized until about midnight, and then the guys began climbing into their selected bunks. Dave, having the reputation for his “nocturnal noise production,” took his sleeping bag and mattress and headed out to the Otter, where he slept for the next three nights.

As the others drifted off to sleep, I updated my journal at the small kitchen table, illuminated only by a flashlight. Looking out the small window of the door, I watched the moon

rise even higher, shining brightly, with its light bouncing along the ripples on the lake. For that opportunity, those four men and the small cabin, I am humbled and so very thankful.

Wednesday morning we awoke to a cold, blustery 30 mph wind. After using the wash facilities at the lake and a hot breakfast, we headed out for our first day of caribou patrol. Dave fueled up the chopper, then Earl, Warren and I boarded. Hap remained at the camp, keeping radio contact with us in case we needed his assistance. Obviously, radio communications are crucial when working in such a remote area. We had a hand-held radio that uses satellites instead of relay towers. These "sat phones" are the primary source of communications for everyone in this area.

Our first stop was at the Nejanilini Lake Lodge, owned by Grant Martin (a retired professional hockey player) and his wife. This was their first year of ownership, and after a tour of the lodge we were treated to coffee and lunch. One thing I soon noticed about Officer Simmons, our "officer in charge," was that every day he seemed to time his visits so that he hit the nicest lodges around noon. Another thing I soon learned about Earl was that he really enjoyed eating.

Our next stop was at a temporary campsite of approximately 20 natives of the Dene tribe. We were met by Chief Gladys Powderhorn, the female tribe leader. She informed us that they had been at that spot for almost three weeks and that the seven men who were hunting had taken about 20 caribou. She added that this trip involved men, women and children, trying to expose the youngest members of the tribe to the traditional form of hunting. They showed us how they were drying the caribou meat on wooden poles over smoldering fires, and how

the hides were fleshed with a tool made from a moose leg bone. Following our conversation, we were treated to freshly made bannock, a type of homemade bread.

The next stop was at an out-camp. While there, we issued two citations for loaded firearms in boats while they were under motor power, and two written warnings for minor infractions. Throughout the day we flew to camps, checking them and any hunters we saw hunting. I smiled to myself as I wondered what some of these guys must have thought as we put down the chopper next to them. Weather worsened as the day passed, and late in the afternoon we checked a camp from which three caribou had been killed. Only 7 of the 12 quarters were present, however. Evidently, much of the meat had been left in the bush, a violation under Manitoba law.

Leaving me at the camp with four of the occupants, Earl, Warren and one of the hunters returned to the kill sites. Upon their return, one citation and two warnings were issued. As darkness quickly approached and the snow fell, we loaded two front quarters and a carcass on Warren's lap in the chopper for our return trip to camp. As the last minutes of summer officially passed, snow covered the roof over our heads. This was another of many "firsts" on my trip — snow in the summertime.

The next morning, Thursday, we awoke to a snow-covered ground. Welcome to the first day of fall sub-arctic style. While on patrol we located a pack of 10 wolves. As we circled with our cameras and video recorders in hand, I wondered who was more excited, me or the critters on the ground as we flew over them just above treetop level.

I was struck immediately by the color variation of the wolves, from white to red to black and combinations thereof. At first it looked like one white wolf had a red head, but closer examination revealed that the red was blood, obviously from a recent feeding on a caribou carcass.



ONE OF MY primary duties while in Manitoba was helping to check caribou hunters. Native Americans are shown here drying meat on wooden poles over a smoldering fire.

We later landed at a camp housing 11 hunters. Outside the camp we found 22 caribou racks lined up. A short distance away was a red fox, which had been shot illegally. Ten of the 11 hunters were inside the camp. After checking to see that all the racks were tagged and the meat accounted for, it was obvious that none of the hunters had removed all edible meat from the field. While Earl had the hunters separate their items, Warren and I took written statements from everyone present. Finally, the last hunter returned from the field, but wearing no fluorescent orange clothing, a violation of the law. Earl informed the camp occupants that we would be back the next day. All of the meat was confiscated and airlifted by chopper back to our camp. With much work yet to be done, it was obvious that our scheduled departure on Friday would be delayed.

Following breakfast the next

MANITOBA officer Warren Toderan, right, and me with members of the Dene tribe at Weak Tea Bay. Native American elders were introducing some of the younger members to traditional hunting methods.



morning, we returned to the camp. The day before, the hunters had agreed to take us to the kill sites. Today, however, everyone had a change of heart. Earl politely informed everyone that in addition to the meat, which had already been confiscated, all racks and other items would be taken as evidence. Within 10 minutes, everyone decided to cooperate. Although they still would not fly out to the kill sites, each agreed on his own to return and recover the re-

mainder of the meat. Prior to our departure, citations were issued to every hunter in camp. They were instructed to have the meat separated, bagged and tagged for our return the following morning.

With a few hours of daylight left, we checked a few more camps, hunters and caribou. During our patrols, we actually crossed the 60th parallel into the Northwest Territories, and we saw hundreds of caribou. The terrain there was even more void of vegetation, with only lichen covering the ground and rocks. We returned to camp "early" that day, with about an hour of daylight remaining. Once again, our "Chef Hap" had dinner waiting. He

will never know how much those meals were appreciated.

Saturday morning we flew out to finalize our wanton waste investigation. Earl related that hunters leaving meat in the field is all too common. Generally, each hunter is limited to a certain weight for his return flight. Unfortunately, many are simply head hunting, and if they kill two animals, they have little room for the meat. In such cases, the meat is often left in the bush. We airlifted the remainder of the meat the hunters had removed from the kill sites back to our base camp at Croll Lake. Dave and I loaded our gear into the chopper and said our goodbyes to Earl, Warren and Hap.

The 160-mile flight from Croll Lake to Churchill renewed my amazement of the vastness of Northern Manitoba. Flying east-southeast, the terrain gradually changed from the sub-arctic tundra to a maze of small lakes, to the wet coastal marshlands. The outermost landmark along the Hudson Bay just outside of Churchill is an old fort built by the French in the 1700s. The 6-foot thick stone walls are still intact and the cannons facing out of their portholes still appear ready to fire. Upon exiting the chopper, we immediately felt the cold, seemingly unceasing winds of the Hudson Bay.

We were met by officer Steve Garychuck from the Flin Flon district and seasonal officer Mark Francis. Steve was there for a few weeks to help during the bear season. After stopping by the "Bear House," the government quarters where Steve and Mark were housed, and our overnight resting area, the guys gave us a tour of Churchill. Included in our stops were a gift shop, the Natural Resources Office, a museum and "bear jail," temporary home for many polar bears making their way into town prior to freeze-up on the bay. The "bear jail" is basically two converted old military Quonset huts that can house up to 50 bears at a time. The cells were vacant; Mark informed us that the migration of the bears to Churchill was just beginning, and that in about a month, the town of a few hundred people would be host to a few thousand tourists and a few hundred polar bears. Generally, problems occur when people trying to see or photograph these phenomenal creatures, mistake the animal's total lack of fear and somewhat curious nature, for what seems as almost friendly behavior. The truth is that polar bears can and will do anything they so desire, including unprovoked attacks with lightening quickness. My first sighting of this awesome animal was from a few hundred yards away, when I saw a couple of bears lounging among the rocks on the beach.

Sunday, after a short night, I went on the 7 a.m. "Bear Patrol" with Mark and Steve. Both culvert traps set earlier were undisturbed, and all was quiet through-



THE MAIN reason WCO Mark Allegro selected Manitoba as his destination in the officer exchange program was to see a polar bear. He got his wish.

out town. We visited the trapline, a series of snare pits used to capture problem bears. After seeing the snares my fellow Pennsylvania officers use for black bears, I suddenly realized the tremendous strength polar bears must have when I noticed the snares here were made of winch cable.

A gentleman from Germany who was there studying the effects of tourism stress on polar bears gave us a short tour and overview of the privately operated research center, a converted military missile site. Following our patrol, I had time to make it to church, and even there I was reminded of the threat of people/polar bear encounters when, during Mass, the priest prayed for a safe bear season. By 1 p.m. the winds "calmed" to about 35 mph, thus, Steve and Mark drove Dave and me to our chopper at the airport. Once there we discovered that the cool, gentle overnight breezes had spun Dave's helicopter 270 degrees and sent it 60 feet down the runway.

The next leg of our journey was an hour flight south-southwest to Gillam, where we were met by officer Jim Kamann. Jim, recently assigned to the district, showed me around Gillam, and I noticed that much of the town appeared fairly modern. Jim stated that a large percentage of the residents are employed at a recently constructed hydro-electric plant along the Nelson River. An amusing sight was of Jim's other patrol vehicle, a two-person railroad car fully equipped with emergency lights, siren and door decals. It is small enough that it can be lifted on and off the main rail, which is the only means of ground transportation between Gillam and Churchill. That evening, Jim and his wife had me, Dave and some of his friends for dinner. Once again, I was amazed at the overwhelming hospitality these complete strangers showed me and my "taxi driver."

Monday morning Jim, Dave and I headed for the airport to load the chopper. Joining us was Holly Chappell, a recent graduate of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police academy.

We flew east that day, along the Nelson River to Marsh Point, then southeast along the Hayes River to the Hudson Bay coastline. We flew over the old Hudson Bay Fort, which was a major trading post during the 1700s. Today, the building is a museum, and I was not surprised to find out that nine months into the year, the museum had had only 39 visitors.

Upon reaching the bay, we flew east-southeast along the shoreline, hoping to see some polar bears making their way north to Churchill. Four inches of fresh snow made it difficult to spot white bears, but we did manage to locate some as they walked along the coastline. Our flight also took us amidst thousands of geese, both Canada and snow. With the present weather conditions, I wondered if they would make it back to the states before me.

Our first stop was at a goose hunting lodge, and I immediately noticed the 10-foot bear fence surrounding the encampment. All the hunters were gone and the owner was closing up for the season. He related that a few weeks earlier, someone forgot to close the gate to the fence one evening, and a polar bear crashed through the door to the small building and into a group of hunters. Fortunately for the hunters, their firearms were close by but, unfortunately for the bear, it was destroyed. Following a check of another camp, we began our return trip along the coast and to the Hayes River, and again we were fortunate to see a few more bears.

We arrived in Gillam at 4:30 that afternoon, and after refueling and saying our goodbyes, Dave and I began our final flight together, to Thompson. Our 7-day journey had taken us throughout the northern, most remote areas of Manitoba, during which Dave estimated we flew approximately 3,000

miles. Dave added that I was probably the first passenger to ever make such a journey across northern Manitoba in a chopper.

As daylight began to ebb during the final minutes of the flight, our conversation ceased; we were both lost in our private thoughts of our "trip of a lifetime." After a few final photos, we touched down in Thompson. At the hotel, I had a message from officer Earl Simmons. Later, he called to see how the remainder of my trip had gone. What a guy. After dinner with Dave, I prepared for my early commercial flight the following morning. As I crawled into bed, I was quite tired, yes, but forever changed by what had transpired over the past eight days. And for this, I thanked God.

The next morning I met Dave downstairs for coffee. At 7:15 we said our good-byes. Dave, my private helicopter pilot for the week, was a very integral part of my adventure, as well as a very decent person.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge some of the many

who made this trip possible. First, NAWEOA for sponsoring this officer exchange program. The Department of Natural Resources of Manitoba graciously provided everything possible to make my trip a success. As a Pennsylvania WCO, I was proud to have been able to work with the officers of Manitoba. They are a credit to themselves, their supervisors and the entire department. To the PA Game Commission Executive Office, my region director and supervisors, I am not only thankful but honored to have had the opportunity to represent our agency. Finally, I must mention officers Earl Simmons and Warren Toderan. If any one person was responsible for the success of my trip, it was Earl. From the NAWEOA conference in Albany, to being my point of contact with the Department in Manitoba, to arranging the trip, Earl was in charge. Your hospitality and friendship will never be forgotten. And finally to Dave Senger and "Hap," my pilots. Thank you not only for your superb piloting, but for your friendship as well. To each and everyone who helped in making this trip a reality, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. □

DAYS OF YORE



NOT MUCH is known about this photo other than the year was 1948 and the buck was taken in Lackawanna County. It appears that all but the fellow on the left are carrying Winchester rifles.

The Quest

By Ray Miller

SPRING TURKEY HUNTING can be the most enjoyable, but also one of the most frustrating, activities for a hunter. Sometimes it's best to remember that the real reason to be in the woods at this time of year is simply to enjoy the rebirth of nature, and the wonderful sights and sounds of the spring woods. Despite Pennsylvania's large turkey population, calling a mature gobbler into shotgun range is no easy task. How could the gobbler season become even more challenging? Here's one way.

My son Ray Jr. has always been the ultimate outdoorsman. Hunting and fishing seemed to be all that mattered, except for organized sports. Excelling at track and field and baseball was a way to pass the time until the next "opening day." Beginning in 1994, however, being able to hunt and fish became much more challenging for 16-year-old Ray, because he became paralyzed from the waist down from an ATV accident. And that same year we began our quest for a spring gobbler.

Mature gobblers seem to have survival instincts that border on the supernatural. To make matters more difficult, because Ray has to hunt from a wheelchair, we had to locate a bird fairly close to a road.

For years, Ray and I, along with several of his friends, began scouting for turkeys each spring in early April. We'd roost birds in the evenings and listen for them early in the mornings, trying to locate ones that were accessible. But each year something seemed to happen that kept Ray from connecting.

The spring of 2000 started much like prior years. Birds were located and hunted, but the gobblers were "henned up" and wouldn't work to Ray's gun. Many enjoyable mornings were experienced, however, and Ray and I became closer, not only in our





love of the woods, but also in our relationship.

The second Thursday of the season I headed into the woods at 7:30 p.m., scouting for that one gobbler that would fill all our requirements. At 8:35 several gobblers sounded off from the adjacent hill. There was an access road in the general location of the roost area, so I called Ray and told him to be ready in the morning. Because he works third shift at a factory, Ray would have to take off a half day of work.

Promptly at 4:45 the next morning, dressed in full camouflage, the excited young hunter exclaimed, "Today is the day!" In a moment, filled with the contagious excitement that only a hunter can know, I was up, dressed and out the door.

We drove as close as possible to where the turkeys were roosted, got our equipment ready and set off. Ray wheeled himself down the dirt lane as I carried our equipment. When we got near where the birds had roosted, I put Ray on my back and piggybacked him several hundred more yards into the woods. After returning for

our gear, we were finally set up and ready.

Before long the predawn stillness was broken by the first gobbles of the morning, but the birds were about 300 yards away. We retrieved the wheelchair, circled around and closed the distance. A gobbler sounded off about 80 yards away, so I got Ray situated against a tree and ditched the wheelchair. I set out a decoy and softly yelped on my call. *Gobble-obble-obble-obble.*

This bird was excited and headed our way. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye and only 15 feet away, several hens moved into view, trying to figure out where the strange yelps were coming from. Don't move, I willed, hoping Ray had seen the birds, too. Several minutes went by without a sound or movement from either the turkeys or hunters, and the hens finally moved off. We feared the gobbler had moved off, too, and I didn't know if I could call him back into range.

I was about 10 yards behind Ray, and I couldn't see everything that was going on, but finally the bird seemed to be heading in our way again. Boy, wouldn't it be great, I thought, and then *bang!* The blast echoed through the woods, followed immediately by a loud "yes!"

As I hurried to the gobbler and brought it back for Ray to admire, a wave of emotions overwhelmed us. The trophy we had worked so hard for and that had so often eluded us was finally ours. The tom weighed 19 pounds and had a 9-inch beard, which will always have a special place of honor in Ray's room.

On that beautiful spring morning all the ingredients came together to make it the most memorable and enjoyable outing a father and son could possibly have. □

Game Drive

IF YOU grew up in Pennsylvania, it's likely that your appreciation of your outdoor heritage began in the back seat of the family car. Sunday afternoons were the perfect time for a drive, just to see what you could see, and Pennsylvania had lots to see — stunning mountain views, picturesque farm valleys and, of course, wildlife. For the price of a tank of gas and a few ice cream cones, a family could enjoy the commonwealth's treasures and each other's company. What a bargain!

A drive along Pennsylvania's highways has always been a great value. Even in the 1930s, at the height of the Great Depression, when more than 900,000 Pennsylvanians were out of work and automobiles were notoriously unreliable, people took to the roads. The federal government, under Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal," actually hired accomplished writers and photographers to produce a series of guidebooks for these travelers. These state guidebooks provide a detailed snapshot of an America that many of us have experienced only through the stories of our parents and grandparents, and by watching reruns of "The Waltons."

The federal government, under the Works Projects Administration (WPA) created 8.5 million jobs through a variety of programs best known by their abbreviations. This "alphabet soup" included the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps), the YCC (Youth Conservation Corps), the

CWA (Civil Works Administration), the TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority), and the NIRA (National Industrial Recovery Act). Workers built roads and bridges, planted trees, excavated archeological sites, and produced works of art and literature. The Pennsylvania we know today, with its forests and accessible public lands, is the legacy of this army of government workers.

The Federal Writers Project of the WPA published *Pennsylvania, A Guide to the Keystone State*, in 1940. Writers were paid about \$20 a week to travel throughout the commonwealth, making observations and listening to stories. The writers were themselves Pennsylvanians, and the guidebook captures the sense of discovery they experienced in collecting the stories of their neighbors and friends.

The guidebook reveals a Pennsylvania that is both as foreign as another country and as familiar as your own backyard. In 1940, 27 Class I railroads, 50 major bus lines, and dozens of streetcar companies serviced the state. More than 27,000 of the more than 40,500 miles of state highway were "surfaced or improved;" an additional 118,500 miles of township roads and city streets were at least minimally maintained. The maximum speed limit on the highways was 50 mph, and

By Paula Zitzler

Outdoor Heritage will feature more stories of Pennsylvania's great outdoors on May 3, 4 & 5 at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds near Huntingdon. During the 3-day event, you can visit dozens of exhibits by historical and outdoor agencies and organizations, hear Game Commission biologists and managers talk about game populations, listen to traditional and ethnic music, and visit with re-enactors interpreting the lives of 18th and 19th century soldiers. Admission is free. For more information, call 1-800-898-3636, or check out www.westsylvania.org/oh.

hand signals were required when turning and stopping. It was prohibited to park on the highways, to coast in neutral, and to pass a streetcar that was loading or unloading passengers.

The federal writers summarized the commonwealth's wildlife of the 1930s as follows:

Scattered throughout the commonwealth can be found such mammals as the skunk, opossum, mink, weasel, muskrat, groundhog, mole, short-tailed shrew, beaver, deer, rabbit, squirrel, field mouse and bat. Porcupines are still seen in some sections. The catamount, or wildcat, has been reported in virtually every county in the state, although at rare intervals. The panther, which sometimes attained a length of six feet, was the largest carnivore but is now extinct. Wolves, once common in forested areas, were exterminated about 1850 by hydrophobia contracted from dogs. Black bear, the state's prize game animal and the largest carnivorous animal now inhabiting Pennsylvania, was on the verge of extinction when the Pennsylvania Game Commission instituted protective measures. It is found in the central Allegheny counties and other high-brush country with rocky ledges and mountaintop swamps, especially in the Pocono and Pike County sections.

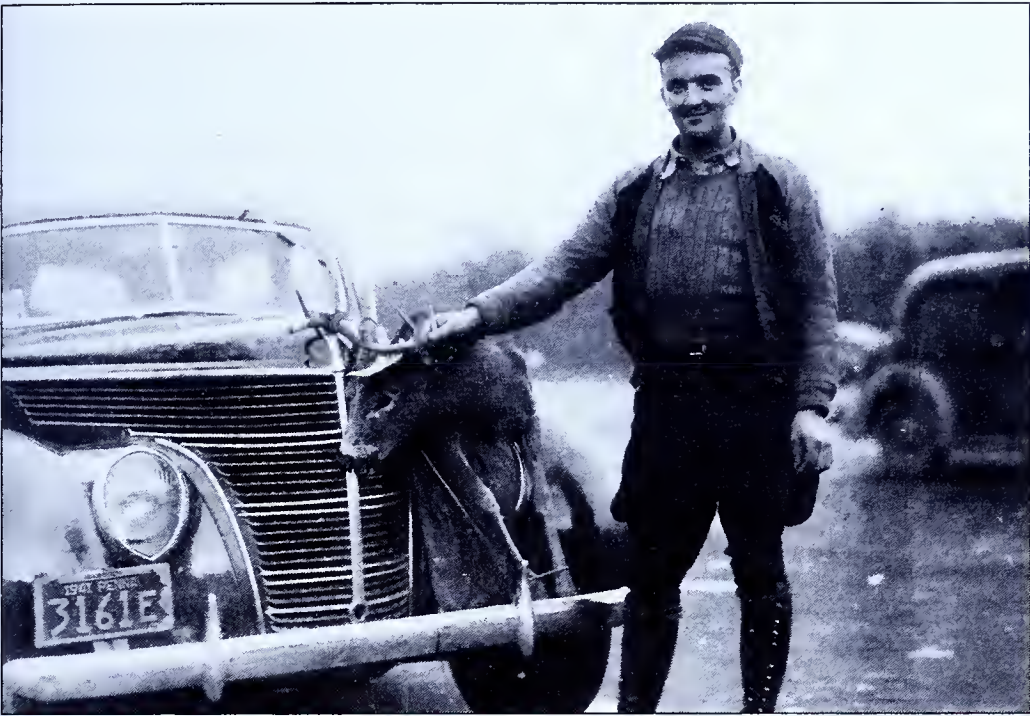
Imported game birds, such as quail, the "English ring-necked pheasant" and the "Hungarian gray partridge" were gaining in popularity among hunters. Migratory fowl such as ducks, geese, woodcock and some shore birds, were also favorites. By 1940, turkeys, herons and wild swans were rarely seen.

By 1940, hunting and fishing had already become important in several local economies, particularly in the northern counties. Hawley, a small town near the north end of Lake Wallenpaupack "almost lost in the woods," sprang up due to the lumber industry in 1827. By the 20th century, many were still employed cutting posts to prop up the roofs of nearby anthracite mines, and others worked in the town's four small textile mills. In addition to these industries, the federal writers noted "the chief income is derived from visiting sportsmen, who depend on local guides."

The writers noted that in central Pennsylvania, along Route 45 near State College, that Bald Eagle State Forest contained some of the commonwealth's wildest and best hunting country. In addition to significant populations of pheasants, deer, bears, wildcats, foxes, raccoons and mink, hunters were also attracted to the ponds and dams in search of beavers. Beavers had been reintroduced here as early as 1920.

The federal writers noted attractions that appealed to the outdoor audience. Many state forests and parks were featured. The Game Commission's training school, opened in 1936 near Brockway, was credited as the first facility of its kind in the United States.

The Trexler Game Preserve in Lehigh County was described as a 1,600-acre tract surrounded by a high 13-mile long wire fence. The preserve was home to buffalo, deer, elk, two thousand "Montana sheep,"



BY 1940, hunting and fishing had already become important in several local economies in Pennsylvania, particularly in the northern counties. In 1942, hunters were urged to donate deer skins for the war effort.

20,000 hens and a trout hatchery.

The wildlife of the commonwealth was credited with near mystical powers in some stories related by the federal writers. In one story, a rattlesnake saved the life of the Moravian missionary Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf. Von Zinzendorf had come to Pennsylvania's Wyoming Valley in 1742. His preaching made him unpopular with some of the Native Americans there, who resolved to kill him. According to the story, the Native Americans found von Zinzendorf kneeling in prayer. As they prepared to attack, a rattlesnake crawled across the missionary's legs. The Native Americans interpreted this as a sign of divine protection and spared his life.

In Hazleton, deer are credited with the discovery of anthracite there in 1818. Apparently, settlers noticed the coal where deer had pawed the earth.

In those early days, deer were more plentiful than ammunition. A German immigrant named Vogelbacher settled near Lucinda, just southwest of Kane, in 1820.

Ammunition was so scarce that he would shoot at deer only when they stopped in front of trees. If he missed, or his ball passed through his quarry, he could recover the lead slug from the tree and remold it to use again. Now that's recycling.

The federal writers' 1940 guide to Pennsylvania reminds us of the persistence of change. It's hard to imagine that more than 60 years have passed since the publication of this book, and that some things are so different. Animals that were rarely seen, such as bears and turkeys, are now abundant. Highways and roads have been realigned, towns have grown or diminished, and forests have been cut two or three times. Yet despite all this change, there are still great stories out there along Pennsylvania's roads, just waiting to be discovered. Pack the family or collect some buddies and go find some of your own. And don't forget to stop for ice cream. □

2001 Elk Survey

By Rawland D. Cogan

PGC Wildlife Biologist



Larissa Rose

MONITORING wildlife populations is paramount among wildlife agencies. Population trends in numbers, and sex and age changes are used to develop management goals, objectives and strategies. Pennsylvania's elk population has been surveyed annually since 1971, except for 1990, 1995 and 1997, when lack of snow cover and/or poor flying conditions prevented aerial flights (Figure 1). Since 1988, the elk herd has been increasing; last year the herd was estimated to be 566 (Table 1).

2001 Survey Results

During January 2001 the survey was conducted using a combination of ground and aerial counts. Two Bell-Jet Ranger Helicopters were used for

TWO HELICOPTERS and a fixed-wing plane were used to conduct the aerial portion of the survey. The results of this year's survey indicate the herd has grown from 566 last year to 622 this year.

transect flights. Helicopter pilots were Paul Rayhill (owner Aviation Services Unlimited) and Wayne Hall. A fixed-wing Cessna 182 was also used, piloted by Jim Burton (PennDOT Bureau of Aviation), and Glen Raup (PennDOT Bureau of Aviation) coordinated all aviation services. Personnel from the PGC, DCNR Bureaus' of State Parks and Forestry assisted in the survey. Joe Bologna provided hangar and office space, from the St. Marys Airport Authority.

The survey was conducted January 22-25, when snow cover was sufficient enough to increase sightability of elk. To determine the population size, we use a mark-resighting estimator. The number of radio-collared elk is known prior to the survey. During flights, observers record the number and sex and age of all elk seen, as well as the number that are radio collared. The proportion of radio-collared elk available to be seen and the number actually sighted is used to estimate population size (For more on the elk survey technique see *Game News* April 1992).

Figure 1

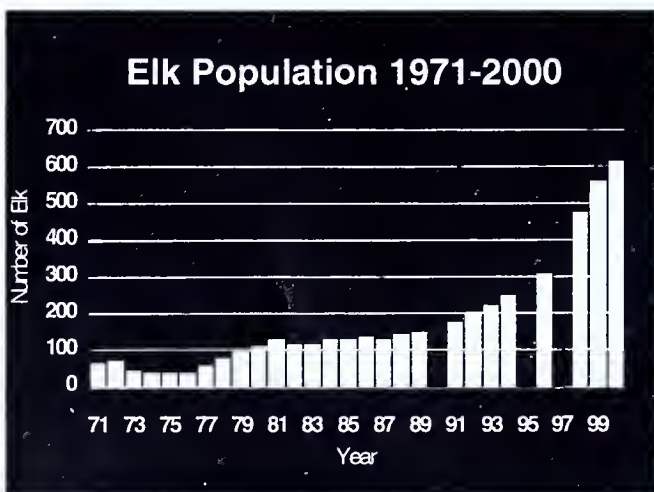


Table 1. 2001 survey results (2000 results in parentheses).

Sex and Age	Number		
	Verified	Estimated	%
Branched-antlered bulls	99 (76)	106 (99)	17 (18)
Spike bulls	33 (40)	56 (52)	9 (9)
Adult cows	226 (207)	311 (288)	51 (51)
Calves	97 (88)	135 (120)	22 (21)
Unknown	9 (5)	14 (7)	2 (1)
Totals	464 (416)	622 (566)	100

Based on ground and aerial flights, this year's elk population was estimated at 622. The sex and age breakdown was 311 adult (≥ 1 year) cows, 135 calves, 106 adult (≥ 2 years) bulls, 56 spike bulls, and 14 unknown sex and age.

Discussion

Two days prior to the survey a storm dumped 3 to 5 inches of snow, followed by dropping temperatures and increasing winds. Aerial flights began early Monday morning. Elk — as well as deer and turkeys — did not move during the storm. Many took cover in thick conifers (pines, hemlocks and mountain laurel), where they were much more difficult to observe than those in open fields. Another factor that influences sightability is group size. Large groups are more conspicuous and easier to see than small groups. Often bulls tend to be alone or in small bachelor groups and are occasionally missed during transect flights.

The number of known elk mortalities has gradually increased since the late 1980s, as has the population. The actual mortality rate has been relatively stationary, ranging between 6 and 8 percent.

Mortalities are recorded by cause, sex, age, date and number for each known elk death. In some cases the exact cause of death was not known, so we listed those in the "unknown" category.

During 2000, 50 elk are known to have

died. Of these, 12 were killed on the highways; 6 were killed by trains, another 6 were illegal kills; 4 were killed for crop damage; 3 were accidental deaths; 2 died of tick infestations, and 17 died of unknown causes.

The number of elk in the 225 mi² traditional range has stabilized during the last 2 years due to natural dispersal and elk trap and transfer projects. Natural dispersal has been ongoing for at least 10 years and trap and transfer projects occurred during the winters of 1998-2000. The number of elk outside of the traditional range doubled in the last year, and we expect this trend to continue.

Based on the sex and age of the elk population, causes and number of known elk mortalities, elk reproductive rate, and calf survival, we expect the population will continue to increase. By this fall, prior to the proposed elk hunting season, we expect the population to be near 700 animals. □

Larissa Rose



THE SIZE of the group and whether or not the animals are in the open affect the likelihood of the elk being spotted by the surveyors.



Once a year, individuals dedicated to managing woodcock and their habitat gather to gain more insight into this unusual bird and its dwindling numbers.

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

TIMBERDOODLE, night partridge, big-eye, mudsnipe, bog sucker, mud bat, Labrador twister. No matter what you call it, the American woodcock has fallen into an undesirable pattern. Each year in Pennsylvania, as well as in most parts of its breeding range across the eastern United States and Canada, the woodcock population drops two to three percent. Today, we have only about half or so of the population we had 30 years ago. To keep close tabs on woodcock and manage them as best we can, several surveys are carried out every year.

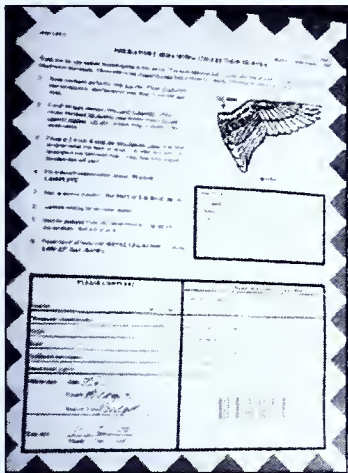
One is the singing ground survey.

In the spring, the male woodcock performs an elaborate courtship display involving acrobatics and unique, conspicuous singing. The song of the displaying male woodcock provides an excellent opportunity for the population to be counted. In the central and northern parts of the breeding range, observers drive along established 3.6-mile routes shortly after sunset, stopping at 10 listening points and recording the number of woodcock heard singing. Every year, about half of the 1,500 routes in the range are surveyed. The observers' counts are used to monitor the annual and long-term (since 1968) population trends.

A second way woodcock are monitored

is through the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program (HIP). Developed in 1998, HIP is gradually being phased in as part of the woodcock management program. Using information supplied by hunters on where and when they hunt and how many birds they take, biologists can develop more reliable estimates of the harvest of all migratory game birds, including woodcock, and ultimately improve hunting seasons and population management.

A third way of monitoring woodcock is through the wing-collection survey. Introduced in 1963 and modified in 1997, this survey provides information on the reproductive success of woodcock. Each year, more than 4,000 participants are selected from an historical database of hunters — and now also from random selections from HIP. Each selected hunter is sent 10 postage-paid envelopes.



AN ENVELOPE containing three wings from a successful hunter in Michigan.

After each day of hunting that he gets woodcock, the cooperater fills out an envelope, includes a wing from every bird harvested that day, and mails it to the USFWS in Laurel, Maryland. The information hunters include on the envelopes provides biologists with the date, location and success of each hunt. After the seasons are over, biologists from throughout the

United States meet for a wing bee, where wings are examined to determine the birds' sex and age. This year's bee was held in State College, where representatives from 12 states gathered in early February to examine what turned out to be 8,442 wings from 24 states. (Wings from some southern states hadn't yet arrived and could not be examined.)

On the wing, the outer (primary) feathers are used to determine sex. A male's outermost three are significantly narrower than a female's. If the width is too close to tell, the distance



THE PRIMARY AND secondary feathers on the wings are examined to determine a woodcock's age and sex.

from the last joint of the wing to the longest of the primary feathers, the wing chord measurement, is used. If it measures less than 127 millimeters, then the bird is definitely a male. If the length is 139 millimeters or longer, the bird is definitely female. In between, and the bird's sex is just marked "Unknown."

The age of a woodcock is determined by studying the tips of the fifth through eighth secondary feathers — the wing feathers closest to the body. Both adult and immature birds have a narrow buffy line running along the tip of each of these feathers. On an immature bird, a distinct dark band separates the buffy tip from the mottling below, which is symmetrical on



WHEN AGE CAN not be determined by looking at the secondary feathers, a microscope may be used to examine wear on the primary feathers.

both halves. On an adult feather, the dark band is missing, allowing the asymmetrical mottling to blend into the buffy tip.

While this process may sound simple, varied feather patterns, and missing and damaged feathers can, in some instances, make aging difficult. If age cannot be determined by the secondary feathers, then the amount of wear on the primary feathers may be examined under a microscope. This allows the wear of each individual barb on the tips of the feathers to be studied closely. On an immature bird the barbs have a clear "V" shape to them, while an adult's feathers have worn evenly, resulting in flat barbs.

When they arrive at the Migratory Bird Division, each envelope is given a barcode. Every envelope each particular hunter sends in receives the same barcode. Once all wings in an envelope have been studied at the bee,

the wings are discarded and the age and sex of the woodcock are recorded on the outside of the envelope. The hunter barcode on the envelope, as well as a barcode for each age and sex, is then scanned, which automatically enters all this data into a computer.

The envelopes are then returned to Laurel where they are re-scanned to double-check the information. The program allows wing samples from each hunter from this year to be compared to his or her results from last year. This information provides short-term hunter success rates for each state. Each hunter is sent a copy of the population status report, as well as a short report from the annual wing bee.

A great deal of information comes from the wing collection survey. In addition to hunter success rates, an index to how many young were produced (recruitment) is figured from the ratio of immature birds per adult female in the harvest. But the wing bee has many benefits that go beyond data collection. Gathered together in a rather informal setting, biologists working with woodcock and their habitat have an ideal opportunity to share their successes and failures, what's working and what isn't in woodcock management.

One common thread that ran through all of my conversations with those involved with this year's bee was the concern over the loss of woodcock habitat — early suc-



EACH ENVELOPE IS scanned, entering hunter information and success rates into a computer.

Wings Received

Harvest Area	Adult Females			Immatures			Recruitment Index		
	1963-'98	1999	2000	1963-'98	1999	2000	1963-'98	1999	2000
PA	8,820	137	128	12,372	127	138	1.5	0.9	1.1
Eastern US	79,506	1,450	1,185	135,248	1,638	1,651	1.7	1.1	1.3
Total	151,589	3,518	2,855	256,451	3,876	3,570	1.7	1.1	1.2

*Preliminary wing receipt and age ratios from the 2000/2001 hunting season. Data must be error-checked and late arriving wing receipts must be incorporated.

INFORMATION GATHERED at the wing bee is used to determine the number of immature and adult female birds. These numbers are used to figure the recruitment index, which is an estimate of how many offspring each female bird produces.

cession forests. Early succession is the beginning phase of the regeneration of forests that have been cut or burned. According to Game Commission biologist Bill Palmer, "woodcock need dense, shrubby habitat, along with openings for breeding rituals and roosting sites." Other birds that share the woodcock's habitat, such as the ruffed grouse and golden-winged warbler, have also declined.

"We need to promote early succession forestation." That phrase was repeated over and over during the two days I participated in the wing bee. "People have a negative view of clearcutting. We need to get the concept across that forests need to be regenerated," said Jim Kelley of the USFWS's Migratory Bird Division.

Dan McAuley, wildlife biologist at Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge in Maine, told of a 16-acre area that hadn't been cut in years. When the area was properly managed, random 5-acre plots were cut and the woodcock population exploded from 42 to 127. But clearcutting isn't the only way to achieve early succession habitat. Fire is a tool nature uses to regenerate the earth's forests. However, we are quick to suppress nature's efforts, stifling early succession growth.

Of course, loss of habitat isn't the only reason woodcock numbers have been steadily declining. Predation and hunting can also be big factors. "It's a small bird. Anything that can get it is going to eat it," said Dan McAuley, who has been involved with a study of the effects of hunting on woodcock populations. Throughout his 4-year study, woodcock were fitted with radio collars and tracked during the fall in both hunted and non-hunted areas. Overall, hunting seems to have little effect on survival.

The USFWS establishes the nationwide regulations for hunting woodcock, and they take this responsibility very seriously. "We can't ignore hunting influences. We need to look hard to see if we can continue the restrictions in place," Kelley said. "Season and bag limits are based on population trends, and we want to provide hunting opportunities consistent with conditions."

Surveys, studies, wing bees. All of these methods are combined to determine the best way to manage woodcock throughout the United States and Canada. □

4 A.M. and I didn't feel like getting out of bed, but I forced myself and groggily started pulling on my camo outfit. I heard Mom stir in the other room, getting dressed in her hunting duds, too. It was Monday, May 3, 1999, the second day of turkey season. My dad had to work, so my mom said she'd take me out for a couple of hours, if it wasn't too cold. I finished dressing, made sure I had all my calls, and then went out to the kitchen for breakfast. By 4:30 we were ready to go.

About 5 o'clock we arrived at the farm where I had done some scouting, and we started out across a field towards the woods. The moon was nearly full, so we didn't need a flashlight. By the time we crossed the farm fields and the thick cover at the edge of the woodlot and got into the open woods at the base of a ridge, the songbirds had already started singing. We stopped and I owl hooted, in hopes of getting a response from one of the gobblers I knew roosted on the ridge. A fox barked and a woodcock called, and we watched it fly up out of a small clearing, performing its courtship flight. We slowly made our way up the ridge, trying to be as quiet as possible, which was hard because it was extremely dry. We stopped about halfway up the side of the ridge, and I did another series of owl hoots.

All of a sudden an owl called to my left and another to my right. At first I thought it was another hunter, but then I saw an owl fly out of a tree just ahead of me and hoot again. Then on the ridge a gobbler thundered out a deep gobble. I quickly pointed to a large tree near us and told my mom to sit there while I found a different tree. Mom quickly made her way over to the tree, put an orange band around it, then settled in. I walked about 10 yards farther up the ridge, to a big maple. I placed my orange band

around the tree, pulled on my gloves and facemask, and then got situated. I got my slate call out from my pocket and slipped a diaphragm call under my facemask and into my mouth. The gobbler continued to gobble, and as he did, two other toms from the same area joined in.

At about 5:40 I made a few soft clucks, trying to sound like a sleepy hen on the roost. The toms all gobbled at once, one of them even double gobbled. I waited a couple of minutes and let out a few soft yelps on the mouth call. All went silent for a second and then they all burst out gobbling again. Now that they knew where I was, I decided not to call until they flew down from the roost. I took my turkey wing and flapped it softly up and down against my arm to sound like a turkey getting ready to fly down from a tree (a trick I learned from an old turkey hunter).

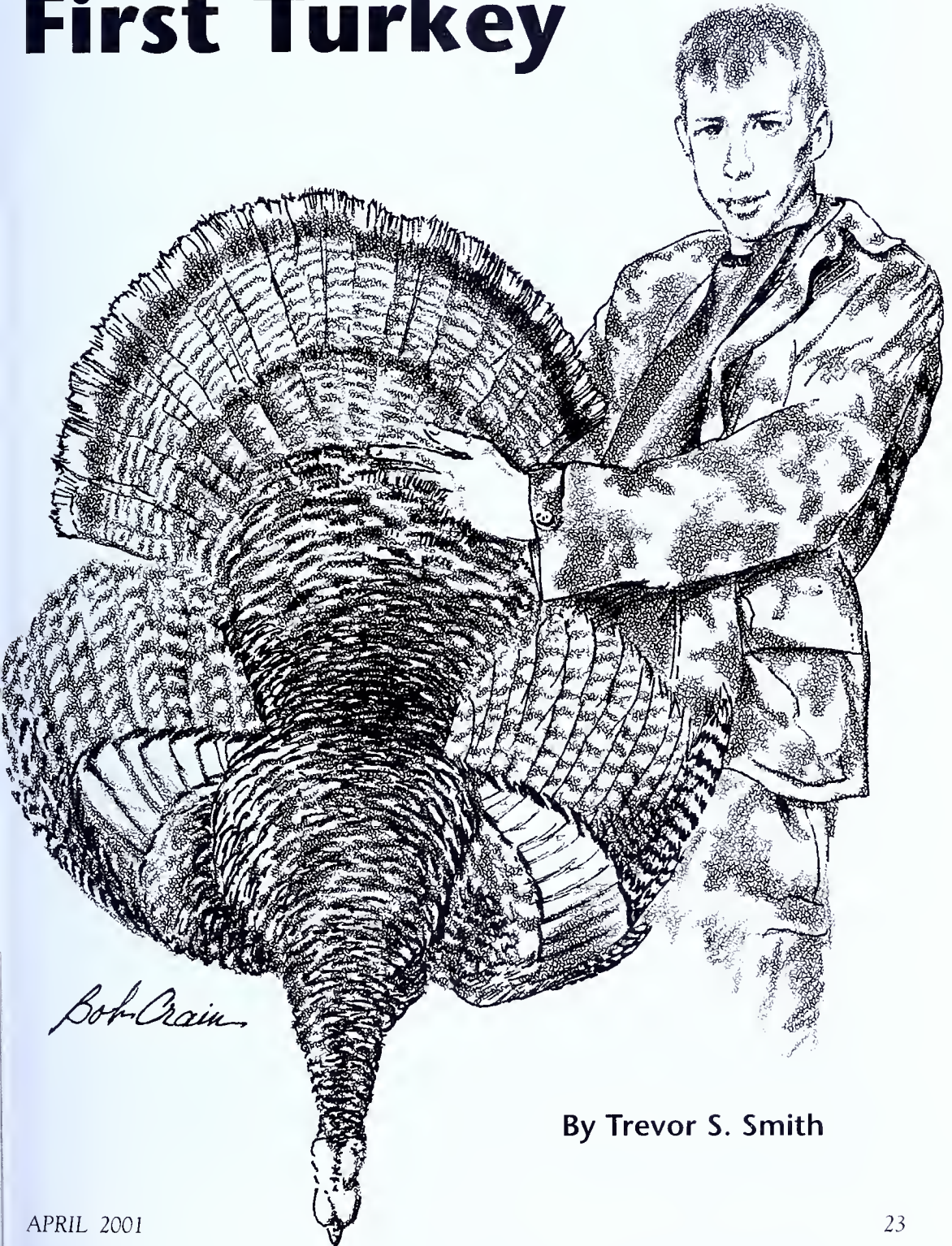
All three birds gobbled, and when they stopped, I beat the wing hard against my sleeve and then on the ground to imitate hens flying out of their roosts. I made a series of loud yelps, and the gobblers responded, but when I made another series of calls, a little lower in pitch and slower in rhythm than the first, the gobblers became silent. I then yelped at a higher pitch and increased the tempo. The gobblers double gobbled; they seemed to really like fast and high pitched yelps and cuts. For the next half hour I called to the toms every few minutes, trying to get them worked up enough to come in.

The gobblers still sounded like they were on the roost and expecting me to go to them, so I thought I should change my tactics before they moved off with some real hens. I started calling faster, higher and louder until my yelps were more like a mix between a yelp and kee-kee run calls, and my cutting was fast enough to be a cackle. The gobblers were double and triple gobbling now. That was just how I wanted them, so I quit calling completely and set my slate call down.

I waited for five minutes and then



First Turkey



By Trevor S. Smith

scratched in the leaves and purred softly on my slate and mouth calls. Another five minutes went by, and I heard one more gobble. I was trying to make the gobblers think that the hens (me) weren't interested in them anymore, and were just content to feed. I hoped it would convince the gobblers that the hens would walk away. After a couple more minutes of silence, I cackled loudly. With that, all three toms double-gobbled at once, creating one loud noise.

Moments later, through the trees, I saw a turkey take off from its roost about 200 yards away. It glided down the mountain straight at me and then veered to the right and landed about 60 yards away. I remember hearing the turkey hit the ground and thinking how heavy it sounded. Then, a couple minutes later, another turkey glided down and landed near where the first one had. I was facing straight ahead, and the gobblers landed on my right, so I knew I had to reposition to face in their direction. A downed tree lay in front of where I thought the gobblers were so, hoping it would screen my movement, I slowly turned until I was facing where the birds had landed.

After waiting a few minutes for them to come out from behind the blowdown, I began to wonder if they had seen me and run off, but then I saw a turkey walking away from me. I thought I had spooked it, but it looked more like another gobbler was chasing it. To see if my hunch was right, I yelped a couple of times and then did some cutting. A turkey on the ridge gobbled and then the turkey to my right gobbled. It was no half-hearted

gobble; it was loud. Now I really started shaking.

The turkey that had been moving away turned around and started coming towards me. I then saw the second gobbler that had flown down, and I could see why the other gobbler was afraid of him. He was big. He came out from behind the brush, strutting and drumming, trying to get the hen to close the gap and come over to him.

I remembered reading that if you call softly while a gobbler is moving, he can't tell exactly where you're calling from and will come in closer to try to pinpoint the hen. I gave it a try. Every time he went into a strut I yelped softly, and the big gobbler slowly made his way in, with the smaller bird in tow. When he went behind a tree about 50 yards away, I again shifted for the shot, and as I did, I let out a fast series of yelps. His gobble cut me off, then he came out from behind



the tree, strutting and angling towards me. His drumming sounded like a car motor from a distance, and I could feel the air vibrate. I planned to shoot when he moved between two trees, but I would have to time it perfectly. Just as the tom stepped in between the two trees, I let out a sharp putt and his head shot straight up. I pulled the trigger and saw him fall over. As I jumped up, the other tom ran up the hill and out of sight. I hurried to the downed gobbler to make sure he didn't get away.

My mom hurried over and was all teary-eyed. We both stopped right there and thanked God for the beautiful gobbler. It was 6:30 when I tagged him, and we realized we would be getting home before my older brother, Luke, went to school, before my younger brother, Owen, was awake, and before my dad went to work. Carrying that

turkey out of the woods was hard, but I didn't mind because I was so excited.

When we got home I rang our front doorbell. When my dad came to the door and saw me there with a turkey, he got real excited. We took some photos, and then I weighed my gobbler and measured the spurs and beard. It weighed 21 pounds and had a 10-inch beard. Its spurs were a little more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch, by my guess, it was two years old.

I was especially happy about my hunt because I did it on my own. My dad had taught me how to hunt deer and small game, but for turkey hunting, I've had to learn nearly everything on my own. I had to start from square one two years ago, when I turned 12. I read every turkey hunting book I could get my hands on, attended seminars, practiced with my calls, and went hunting with two of my father's friends. I love turkey hunting, and I'd like to repay



the debt I owe to the people who took me out when I was learning to hunt. As soon as I'm old enough, I'm going to take as many kids out hunting as I possibly can. I know how much it means to me now. □

TURKEY HUNTING SAFETY TIPS

The primary cause of turkey hunting mishaps is hunters not properly identifying their targets before shooting. Whether it's the excitement of the hunt or just poor judgement, these mistakes have caused injury, and in some cases, death to human beings. After evaluating all aspects of this problem, the Game Commission broadened fluorescent orange safety regulations to include turkey hunting. Since then, incidents — particularly those involving hunters being shot in mistake for turkeys — have declined. However, there is still room for improvement, because even one incident is one too many. Make turkey hunting even safer by following these tips:

Positively identify your target before pulling the trigger.

Make your position known to other hunters.

Never stalk a turkey or turkey sound.

Assume every noise and movement is another hunter.

While calling select a natural barrier to protect your back.

Shout "Stop" to alert approaching hunters.

Eliminate red, white, blue and black from your clothing.

Preselect a zone of fire.

Never carry decoys through the woods in your hands; use a vest or bag.

While fluorescent orange is not required at stationary calling locations, it's strongly recommended. While moving, hunters are required to wear at least 100 square inches visible 360 degrees.

A Promise to Keep

By John Wagner

AS SPRING gobbler season was approaching my 8-year-old son, Kyle, began asking to go out hunting with me. I hadn't been spring turkey hunting in many years, because coaching Little League baseball with my five sons had been a priority. This year, however, with the two older boys out of baseball, and the next two involved in soccer, I found myself with a good opportunity to spend time in the woods with Kyle. The commitment was made: Kyle and I would stay in Lehigh County to hunt on opening day.

At 5 a.m. Kyle was by my bed. "Dad, Dad, time to go hunting." We ate breakfast then headed out.

I always enjoy the

predawn walk across open fields leading to the woods. We spotted several deer feeding, and one did the head bobbing and foot stomping routine before we spooked them. With a couple of snorts they ran into the woods.

We settled into the base of a big tree and watched the woods come alive. First, birds began chirping, followed by a rooster from a local farm, which woke up a flock of geese on a pond down over the hill. After soaking it all in and identifying the various critters, I decided to join the dawn "overture." Trying a few turkey yelps every couple minutes, I was soon convinced the only thing not talking this morning were the gobblers. Nonetheless, Kyle was overjoyed to see four more deer. "The closest I've ever been to deer, Dad," he said. One was a buck, just starting to push some velvet above his brow that



would develop into a nice set of antlers in the coming months. After a couple of hours Kyle decided it was time to go tell his brothers about all that had happened, so we left for home.

The next Friday night Kyle asked what time it got light in the morning, and at 5 a.m. the second Saturday of the season, Kyle was again at my bedroom door asking if it was time to get dressed yet. I told him to let me know when he was ready. At 5:15 he said, "Dad, Dad, are we going?" (Kyle was a good substitute for the snooze button on my alarm clock.) We headed out just after daylight to the same area we had hunted the prior Saturday.

After a half hour of calling I asked Kyle if he wanted to move. He agreed, and we went across the hill to another woodlot. It was about 8 o'clock, and I told him we'd call for 15 more minutes. Then, if he wanted to leave, we'd call it a day.

At 8:15 it happened. My last series of yelps (with just my mouth, as I didn't bring a call along) raised a gobble in the distance. After several more yelps, which raised some more gobbles, I began to wonder if I could actually fool this bird. Finally, however, he started moving up from the creek bottom toward us. I told Kyle not to move a muscle if I whispered that I saw a turkey. I glanced at my watch: 8:40. It had been almost a half hour since the turkey first gobbled and set out to find his "lady friend."

After a last few yelps, still wishing I had a turkey call, a close gobble suddenly shook the woods. The bird had to be just over the rise, and then I saw his red head

moving behind a blowdown. I whispered to Kyle that I saw it, and prayed that I would get a shot — more for Kyle's sake than mine. A couple more steps and the turkey would be in the clear. I chanced a couple soft yelps, to try and keep him on track, as he angled closer to

us. As he closed to within shooting range, I saw his head, beard and chest. I pulled the trigger and down he went. It's hard to describe Kyle's excitement, and the joy I felt sharing this special moment with my son.

When we returned home and shared our adventure with the family, Kyle told his mother that

when the turkey was in sight he didn't move; he didn't even breathe.

With the turkey, which turned out to be a 15-pounder with a 7½-inch beard, in the freezer, I reflected on the morning. It really brought home the importance of encouraging young people to carry on our outdoor and hunting heritage, and how an experience like this can ignite a boy's interest that will stay with him the rest of his life. Kyle is now counting down the years until he becomes a hunter. In truth, with his youthful enthusiasm, he was much more the hunter on the day of our turkey hunt than me. You see, what turned out as a "promise to keep" ended up as a memory I'll always cherish. □



The learning location doesn't matter, city or rural, wildlife education is important.

Urban Wildlife Education

By Dan Lynch

Wildlife Education Specialist Southeast Region

AS A Wildlife Education Specialist for the Game Commission in southeastern Pennsylvania, I can spend as much time in a rural section of Schuylkill County as in downtown Philadelphia. My job is to provide wildlife education for both teachers and students in the 13 Southeast Region counties of the state. If there's one thing I've learned it's that wildlife education is a subject that students and teachers of all ages seem to have an interest in and that awareness of Pennsylvania wildlife as a renewable natural resource is a subject that needs more time and attention.

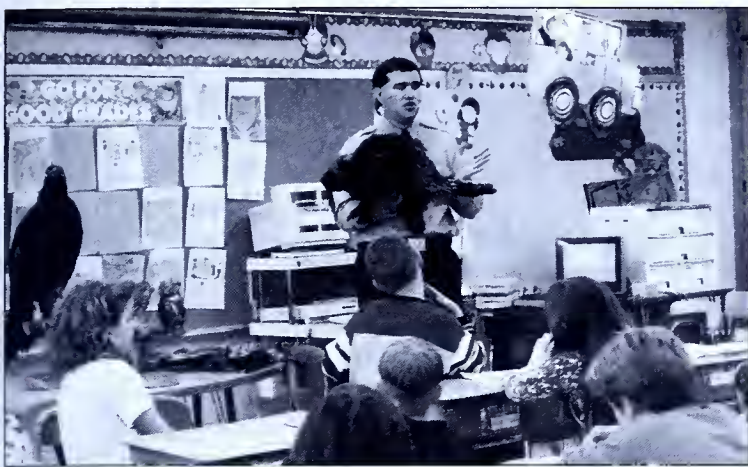
Wildlife education as it relates to the environment is not just a subject taught when the teacher has some free time. The Academic Standards for En-

vironment and Ecology as outlined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education have multiple standards that relate directly with wildlife and characteristics of animals that are deeply ingrained in the activities and lessons we bring to the schools. Activities dealing with food chains, endangered species, habitat and its components, ecosystems and man's use of natural resources are all part of programs taught by the agency.

These activities are designed not just for rural or suburban schools. City schools in southeastern Pennsylvania are benefiting from the agency's programs as well. The Philadelphia School District, made up of more than 250 schools, has its own curriculum standards. These content standards and benchmarks are established so that students at specific grade levels will have goals set that must be attained before graduating to the next grade. Many of these content standards relating to wild animals and the environment are also related to the activities and lessons taught by the agency. We have been in the Philadelphia school system for the past seven years. Our networks are growing, and each year we reach out to more and more urban students and teachers with environmental education.



DAN LYNCH shows students the color variations of Pennsylvania coyotes.



DAN LYNCH explains the finer "points" of a porcupine to an urban elementary school class.

CHERYL TREWELLA, Southeast Region Information and Education Supervisor, explains "plumicorns" or ear tufts of owls found in Pennsylvania.



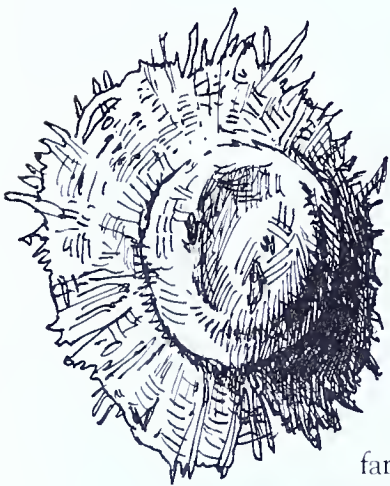
PHILADELPHIA Wildlife Conservation Officer JERRY CZECH working with students at the Philadelphia Envirothon contest.

MIDDLE SCHOOL students identifying wildlife pelts at an envirothon.



A Mountain Chronicle

Penn's Woods Sketchbook by Bob Sopchick



STRAW HAT ROAD was named in 1917, taken from a straw hat tied to a roadside fencepost by some caring soul who hoped the person who lost it would find it. No one did, and it remained there until it was picked apart by nesting birds. During that time, the road was being graded and graveled, and a few months later a township road sign was erected, officially marking it as Straw Hat Road.

At the intersection of Straw Hat Road and the highway, the mining village of Coopersdale sprang up, that name taken from the cooper, or barrelmaker's shop still there from early days. From the village, a tendril of civilization — mostly small clapboard houses and a few homespun businesses interspersed between farms — crept steadily up Straw Hat Road, but that stopped when the mines closed. In 1941 Straw Hat Road was paved up to the last farm.

The road continues on from there as a dirt road that winds far and high into the mountains.

There's a wide pull-off partway up the road with a wonderful view of the deep hollow below and the Blue Mountains to the east. Perched on the lip of the pull-off are the ruins of the Straw Hat General Store. The store was built in that precarious place as much for the view as the commerce. Later, a single gas pump and garage bay was added on.

The store closed in 1979 but was never sold because of its poor condition. The wavy-paned windows, latticed shutters, serpentine stone threshold and other curious architectural appointments had been stripped and sold, and all collectible Americana had been auctioned. Half of the condemned building burned in a brush fire and collapsed. A few of the stone walls remain, crumbling and tilting — the mountain reclaiming its bones.

A fallen wall is covered by a thick mat of vines, except a bare spot where the perfect shape of Pegasus, the mythical flying horse and symbol of an oil company, was tethered for so many years. It appears the horse was bedded down in the vines, lying on its side, and had risen to fly off down this equally mythical valley. The horse was the last thing taken, flying now in the lobby of a touristy antiques co-op.

Part of the main room with its plank floor stands yet. The floor shows drag marks made by chairs and crates that converge like spokes at a hub where a potbellied stove once stood. Twin chestnut posts rise up through the floor, polished at shoulder height by those who stood and listened at the perimeter of the woodstove amphitheater. A bent and crushed flue pipe emits a steady bagpipe note from a warm spring breeze while oak leaves dance in the corners. On mornings such as this, spring gobbler hunters gathered here. Listen carefully, their stories linger.

AN APRIL MORNING, 1976. It is not yet lunchtime, but several hunters are already

pulled in tight around the stove. It had been cold and foggy with a drizzle that progressed to steady rain. The aroma of sauerkraut and pork fills the store. The hungry hunters eat quietly, their thoughts still in the woods. After eating, they sit back with cups of coffee, warming to the conversation and each other.



Old Speed, a redbone hound, is in his usual spot to the left of the stove. Speed is the store dog. Phil, who owns the store, said the hound showed up one day and stayed on.

"I don't believe I've ever seen Speed move," said Andy.

"Old Speed moves so fast you just can't see him do it," said Ed, the mailman and oldest hunter in the group. "There, he turned around. There, Andy, he did it again. Aw, you missed it."

"Don't let him kid you, Andy," said Smokey, Ed's brother-in-law. "That hound's only got two speeds: slow and stop."

Charlie rubs his hands together above the stove. "I just can't seem to get warm. Boy, it was chilly out there today. How bout when that fog rolled in? Not a gobble anywhere, and I did some walking. Tough day for huntin turkeys."

Ed laughed. "Hey, remember Dean Stinson, had the farm down the road? He didn't think turkey huntin was too tough. He hunted spring gobblers only once, the first day of the first season in '68. Dean got a big gobble, but the way he believed it happened and what really happened were two different things.

"Dean bought a box call a couple of days before the season, but never practiced with it, and like most of us back then, didn't know much about spring turkey. At first light, he walks out back to this little woodlot and sits down. He has his breakfast coffee with him. He takes a sip and strokes the call, takes a sip and strokes the call. 'It didn't sound so good,' he told me.

"But this story really starts with Harry Ritter, who was huntin way up on top of the mountain here that same mornin. Harry was from Alabama, and a veteran spring turkey hunter. He hunted them down South ever since he was a boy. Harry called in a gobble first thing, but had the bird in the oven before he pulled the trigger and shot high. The gobble flew off, locked its wings and sailed down the mountain.

"Now Harry didn't know it, but a single shotgun pellet had nicked an artery in the gobble's neck, and while the turkey's flyin, it's dyin, drop by drop. Anyway, the gobble is gettin weaker and weaker, but is still locked up and glidin right along, wobbly though.

"Meantime, down below, Dean's screechin along on his call, and looks up and sees somethin big and black flyin down the mountain right at him. At first, he thought it was a plane, but then sees that it's a turkey with a long beard. This turkey smacks right into the top of a tree near Dean, tumbles down through the branches and hits the ground, stone cold dead. Dean tags the bird and heads back to the farmhouse.

"Dean shows me the gobble when I give him his mail, and tells me huntin these lovesick gobblers is too easy. He said that bird came flyin right down to his calls, tried to land in a tree, but was so excited lookin for the hen that it hit a branch and broke its neck. Didn't even have to shoot his gun.

"I saw the pellet hole in its neck, and from hearin Harry's story earlier when I dropped off his mail, I just put two and two together. I never told either one what I knew, though. I just figured it was best not to. Important thing was that gobble didn't go to waste."

SEVERAL MORE rain-soaked hunters drift in, lean against the posts, and start wolfing down the hot pork sandwiches. No one has a turkey. Then an International Scout with a ravaged body chugs in and stops in a cloud of blue exhaust. “Look there, it’s Mike,” said Charlie. “Oh my, look what he got now.”

Mike Pearson enters the store, smiling shyly, a magnificent double-bearded gobbler draped over his shoulder. The bird is handed around, hunters guessing at its weight and length of the beards. Mike lays the gobbler in front of the stove, kneels down and fans its tail and examines its stout, wine-colored legs adorned with long black spurs.

Mike was a legend of sorts in those parts. The big yellow antlers on the back wall are his, as well as the bearskin rug tacked up beside them. Mike was Phil’s nephew, and worked at the store and a foundry part-time. Everything Mike did was part-time, except for outdoor pursuits. The room hushed, awaiting Mike’s account.

“Oh my gosh, it moved!” said Andy, pointing.

Everyone stared hard at the bird.

“I mean Old Speed there. He moved. I saw him, honest.”

Speed yawned. His nose twitched and he eyed the turkey next to him, but had seen lots of turkeys and heard all the stories before, and was soon back asleep.

Mike spoke softly, “You know where the road washes out, where it gets real rocky up near the top? I tore up my muffler there this morning, so I parked and cut in. I went down through the slashings, crossed the creek, went up through the big rocks and across the laurel flat way out to the old orchard with foundations and stone fences. I knew this bird was there, but he didn’t fly down till after nine, because of the rain and fog. I finally got him fired up, but he was coming in on the other side of an old stone fence. When he stepped past a break in the fence, I took him.”

“You deserved that bird, Mike. That’s a long haul back in there,” said Charlie.

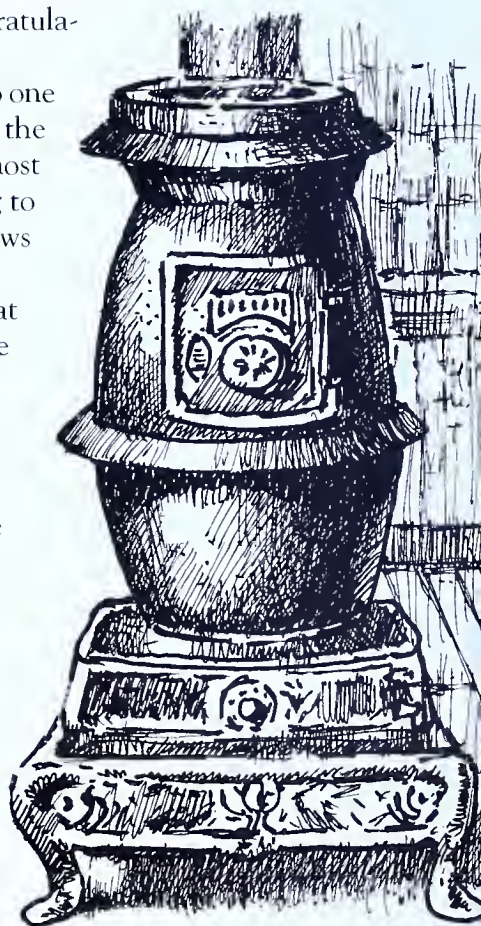
“Well, I gotta get this bird in the freezer and fix the Scout.”

Mike hefted the gobbler and waded through congratulations and slaps on the back.

“He’s something else, ain’t he?” said Charlie. “No one can voice call better than Mike. When he works in the foundry he calls all day long. He can imitate almost anything. You ought to hear him do ravens talking to each other across a hollow. I honestly think he knows what they’re saying.

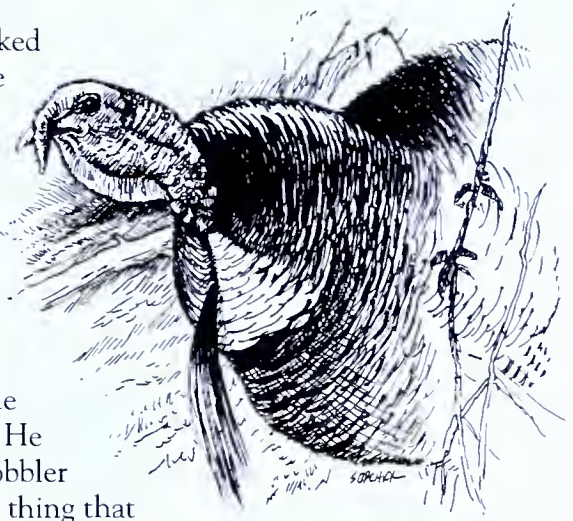
“I remember this one gobbler he was after that gave him fits. It was that old tom that lived in the pines off the big curve, the one everyone here stopped and called to and educated real good. I called that bird in but missed it — don’t ask how — and finally gave up on him. Mike set out to get that gobbler, but I didn’t think that turkey could be killed.

“By the last week of the season that gobbler was a 20-pound raw nerve wrapped in feathers. Mike tried everything, but couldn’t get the gobbler to bite. On the last day Mike used only a couple soft clucks and purrs — real low key stuff. He heard him fly down and the bird came in silent. Mike was set up against a huge windfall, but the gob-



bler circled behind and Mike laid down, tucked up tight against the curve of the log because he didn't want to spook him. The gobbler hopped up on that log and stood there for a long time, listening for that purring hen.

"Well, the gobbler walks down the log and steps off right onto Mike's shoulder like he was a root or a rock, then steps down and walks out across the flat. Mike put the bead on the back of the gobbler's neck, but didn't pull the trigger. He said that in that one instant, when that gobbler stepped on his shoulder, he felt every wild thing that ever lived on that mountain leech right into his heart, and it gave him the chills. Killing that bird would have been a lesser thing. Now that's Mike for you."



"IT'S NOT ALWAYS that pretty," said Andy. One day, Big John Motter, who used to live down by Coopersdale, kills this bird. He field-dressed it and hung it on a clothesline post in his backyard by the woods. I pull in his driveway just after his wife and three daughters came home, and he takes us out back. John's showin us this turkey and is talkin away, but sees somethin inside the cavity of the bird. He sticks his hand, feelin all around, then his eyes bug way out and he yells real loud and this scares his little girls and wife and they all scream, and I jump back myself.

"He yanks his bloody hand out of the bird, and there, clamped down on his thumb is a weasel. Big John has fingers thick as sausages, and this little weasel is no bigger than his thumb, but it looks mad, with those little beady eyes, and it has a deathgrip on him. Instead of tryin to pull the weasel off, Big John starts runnin like a wild man, yellin louder, swingin his arm around, and pretty soon there are screamin Motters runnin everywhere. Big John sticks his whole arm way down in a rain barrel, but that just makes the weasel madder, and it bites down harder, and Big John yells louder, and his wife starts yellin and slappin him on the back tryin to get him to listen so she can help. A weasel might be small, but they are one tough critter."

"Well?" asked Ed.

"Well, what?" said Andy.

"What happened?"

Andy removed his cap and stared out the window, a faraway look in his eyes. He shook his head slowly and sighed. "Last thing we saw was that weasel dragging Big John by his thumb through the brush. No one ever saw him again. A sad thing, really."

And so the stories went, around the stove for hours, for years, forever, as they have since hunters first gathered at a fire. Comedy and tragedy, lore and legend, each story a personal thread stitched to the fabric of life on that mountain.

SUNLIGHT slants down through the budding canopy of oaks, which are now the only roof over the store. Mottled shapes of sunlight and shadow cover the ruins in a camouflage pattern. On the flat below a turkey gobbles, echoing far up the hollow — a stirring proclamation with a message from another time. Most hear it, but only a few know what it means. Listen, and hunters will tell you.

Fawn Survival in Pennsylvania

By Justin Vreeland

Photos by Hal Korber

COYOTES kill fawns in Pennsylvania. It's a fact. Many hunters believe coyotes kill too many fawns, especially male fawns that otherwise might grow up to be big bucks. But how many is too many? That is, if coyotes kill many fawns, can the deer herd still be healthy and produce large bucks that hunters want? When are fawns most vulnerable to predation? What are other sources of mortality for Pennsylvania's young deer? Are predators killing more fawns in the "big woods" counties or in the more agricultural counties? These are some of the questions the Game Commission, with help from the Pennsylvania Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Penn State, is trying to answer about Pennsylvania whitetails.

Actually, Dr. Gary Alt and the rest of the Game Commission's Deer Management Section has initiated several research projects designed to answer some basic questions about deer ecology in Pennsylvania. One of the first projects is a fawn survival study. I am a graduate student from Penn State working on this project for my master's degree.

Deer have been the focus of much research throughout their range, but recent field-based study of the Pennsylvania deer herd is limited or absent. Despite the fact that fawn survival is



TO CAPTURE fawns for the study, crews encircle the animal and carefully but quickly place a salmon landing net over it.

one of the most important factors influencing white-tailed deer populations, little is known about how, why and when fawns die in Pennsylvania.

Two study areas were selected. One is the Quehanna Wild Area, located in Elk, Clearfield and Cameron counties. Quehanna is extensively forested and entirely public land. Bear densities are high and coyotes, bobcats and foxes are present in presumably large numbers. This area receives a lot of hunting pressure, especially during antlered deer season.

The second study area is in eastern Centre County. Called the Penns Valley study area, it is formed from portions of Penns Valley, Brush Valley and George's Valley, and includes the forested mountain ridges and hills between and surrounding the three valleys. Approximately 50 percent of the Penns Valley area is maintained in dairy farms and row crops including corn, soybeans, cereal grains, hay and alfalfa. The Valley study area is privately owned, and hunting access is restricted to some extent. Bears, coyotes and foxes live in and around Penns Valley, but they're probably not as

common as in the Quehanna Wild Area.

In May 2000, the Game Commission hired 18 temporary employees to help catch and monitor fawns in the two study areas. In early May, crew leaders Steve Repasky (Quehanna Wild Area), Wendy Vreeland (Penns Valley), and I began scouting for good fawn habitat. In Penns Valley, Wendy and I made several visits to the tax assessor's office and many telephone calls to landowners, to obtain permission to search for fawns on private land. We received permission from more than 50 landowners who own over 7,000 acres.

In mid-May, our team of 19 was divided into two crews and began searching vast areas on foot, hoping to locate bedded fawns. With the help of the Quehanna crew, the Penns Valley crew found its first fawn on the first day of searching, May 16. Nearly two weeks later, having captured only one fawn after walking miles of endless forest day in and day out, the Quehanna crew was getting frustrated. But then, during a visit from Gary Alt and "Pennsylvania Outdoor Life" from WNEP television, the Quehanna crew stumbled on a better method for locating fawns. One of our crew spotted a doe standing near a

road. The crew stopped to watch and noticed the doe was reluctant to leave the area. We decided to conduct a foot search, thinking this doe might have a fawn nearby and, after a few minutes, located Quehanna's second fawn. Thereafter, the Quehanna crew used vehicles to drive roads to look for does acting as if a fawn might be nearby. This search method proved quite successful.

During a capture, we first encircle the fawn with four or five crewmembers and carefully, but quickly place a salmon landing net over the fawn to prevent it from running away. One of the crew then reaches under the net and restrains the fawn's front and rear legs. Another individual places a radio collar over the head and puts a blindfold over the fawn's eyes to calm it. We then sex the fawn, place an ear tag in each ear, weigh it, remove the blindfold, and release it where it was found. All this usually takes about three minutes.

Some fawns bleat, some make no sound at all. The bleat is not a sound of pain, but rather a distress or alarm call to let its mother know it wants help. Sometimes a doe would come



JUSTIN VREELAND with fawn number 133. Immediately after a fawn is captured a crewmember slips a radio collar over the head and places an ear tag in each ear.



For more on deer management, check out "Deer in Pennsylvania" on the Game Commission's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us. Information on the new deer page includes: a wildlife note on the white-tailed deer; current deer hunting regulations; and the study journal outlining the progress of the ongoing fawn mortality study.

running back while we were processing the fawn, but usually not. Some fawns we caught ran away as soon as we took the blindfold off. Most of the fawns we caught in May and early June remained motionless once we returned them to the bed in which we had found them.

By the third week in June, the Penns Valley crew had captured 52 fawns and the Quehanna crew 46. With the difficult task of catching fawns over, we began the serious business of monitoring the fawns. For the remainder of June, July and the first part of August, crews worked three 8-hour shifts per day using radiotelemetry to listen to the signals emitted from radio collars the fawns were wearing. The collars are set to emit one beep per second. If the collar remains motionless for 4 hours, it emits two beeps per second. When the signal changes to two beeps, we assume the fawn has died and, using a hand-held directional antenna, we walk in on the fawn to determine cause of death.

As of mid-February, 30 fawns (65 percent) in the Quehanna Wild Area had died. Predators accounted for most of these deaths. Predator sign left at fawn carcasses, the way the fawn was killed, how the fawn was eaten, and how any remains of the fawn were stored (called caching) enables us to determine what predator killed it. We have been unable to identify the predator causing six of the deaths in

Quehanna, but of 15 others, coyotes killed seven; bears, six; and bobcats, two. Although many hunters think coyotes are responsible for most fawn predation, compared to studies in other states, the proportion of fawns we found killed by coyotes is about average. What is interesting is that bears killed as many fawns as coyotes. Of the other fawns that died, vehicles struck two, a poacher shot one in early November, and six died from starvation, malnutrition or disease.

In Penns Valley — again as of mid-February — 22 fawns (42 percent) had died. Eleven died from starvation, malnutrition, or disease; coyotes killed three; an unidentified predator killed one. Two were struck by vehicles, one was killed by a haybine, one fell down an abandoned well and starved, and one became stuck in a woven-wire fence and dehydrated or starved. Two were legally harvested during the 2000 antlerless season; one of which had lost its collar, however, so is not factored into the final mortality analysis.

In addition to monitoring fawn survival and documenting mortality, we are gathering information on how these fawns use the landscape. Using radiotelemetry, we locate each fawn on a regular basis. We will use this information to describe fawn home range sizes, how close to roads and farms fawns live, and how much time fawns spend in woods or in agricultural areas. This may help us to say what landscape features contribute to fawn survival and mortality.

We're not yet quite through the first year of this two-year study and already we are beginning to describe how fawns live and die and how they use the landscapes around them. We will continue to monitor the fawns from 2000 through late spring of 2001. In May of 2001, we will capture another 40 to 50 fawns in each of the two areas and monitor their survival and locations. The added information will strengthen our interpretation of fawn survival patterns in these two types of landscapes in Pennsylvania. □



FIELD NOTES



Freak Accident

BUTLER — I arrived at a residence to dispatch a deer thought to have been hit by an archer. Upon examining the deer I felt an object I thought to be a piece of an arrow shaft that had entered high on the left shoulder then penetrated the lungs. I was perplexed why the archer hadn't followed up on the potentially fatal shot. I issued a permit for the deer to the landowner and asked him to call me when he processed the deer, to give me the arrow. Two days later he called and said that the deer hadn't been hit with an arrow after all, but rather a branch about an inch in diameter that the deer apparently impaled itself on.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, RENFREW

Our Future Depends On It

FULTON — I was issuing a citation to a man who had directed his 13-year-old son to shoot at our deer decoy when the dispatcher called and told me to report to the State Police barracks where they had a woman in custody who had been hunting under the influence with her two small children along. While we encourage taking youngsters hunting, please consider the example you set for them.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Effective Camouflage

BERKS — It's not unusual for waterfowl hunters to hear mice and voles rustling in the grass while they sit in their duck blind. While Dale Madeira sat in his blind last fall, he, too, heard the familiar rustling, so he thought little about it. I'm not sure who was more surprised, however, Dale, his dog, or the pair of wood ducks that waddled into the blind.

— WCO CHUCK LINCOLN, LEESPORT

Who Do You Call Now?

MONTGOMERY — Andy Curtis of Pennsburg hit a deer and had to call a towtruck, then while the driver was taking Andy home, they hit another deer.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK



Wildlife Magnets

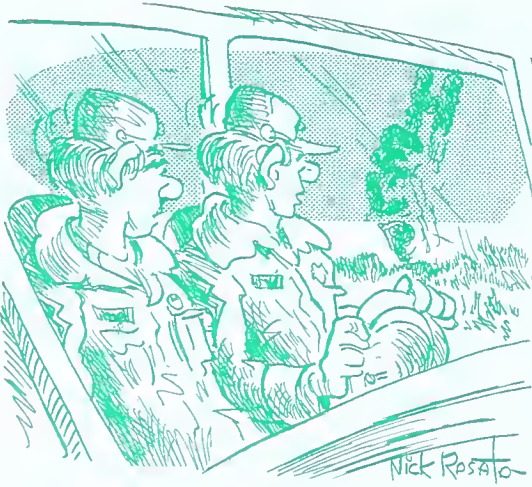
Helping Bedford County birder Janet Shaffer with the annual Christmas Bird Count on Wills Mountain on SGL 48, I couldn't help but notice the wildlife sign in the grape tangles. While most of my winter songbird sightings were in these areas, tracks in the snow indicated that deer, turkeys, grouse and squirrels frequented the grape thickets, too. It also made perfect sense when I crossed a set of bobcat tracks.

— ASSISTANT REGIONAL FORESTER TOM LEWIS, LOYSBURG

Disturbing

SNYDER — It seems that at every sportsman's club meeting I attend there are very few members and seldom youngsters. The future of our hunting and trapping heritage depends on involvement of all sportsmen.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, MIDDLEBURG



Hi-Tech, Not

TIOGA — WCOs recently received cell phones as one more tool to better serve the public, and for safety, but in my rural area I've yet to find a place where the phone will pick up a signal. I guess I'll just have to continue using smoke signals.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE,
MIDDLEBURY CENTER

Inseparable

ELK — While flying over the elk range during the survey last winter it became obvious just how important acorns are to wintering deer populations. On oak ridges where there was a good mast crop we spotted hundreds of deer. Find the food source and you'll find deer.

— WCO RICHARD S. BODENHORN, RIDGWAY

Sure Not Gouda

BUTLER/LAWRENCE — WES Kevin Thompson and I were patrolling during deer season when we received a call to meet a Josee Yoder about a spoiled deer he had taken. Unsure of where he lived, we stopped at a nearby cheese factory and store. Kevin asked the clerk if she knew where to find a Josee Yoder, and she replied that they didn't sell that brand of cheese. After explaining to an embarrassed clerk he was looking for a person, Kevin was able to get directions to the man's home.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIC, PORTERSVILLE

"Lightning Bolt"

WYOMING — Tom Deitzer was driving through Mehoopany Borough when he noticed a squirrel scurrying across an electric wire. Suddenly, a Cooper's hawk swooped down, snatched the squirrel and flew into a nearby tree.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Conscience?

During deer season a man knocked on my door and told me he wanted to turn himself and his partner in for road hunting. He told me they rode around looking for deer, spotted one, then the passenger jumped out, rested his rifle on the truck bed and shot the deer. Some cars went by and the man said he just knew someone would turn him in, so he would rather do it himself. Both men paid their fines and apologized.

— LMO JOHN P. DZEMIAN, SMETHPORT

Firsthand Experience

MONROE — Some of life's most important lessons are taught outside of school, literally. I responded to a call about an injured deer near a college dorm, and when I got there I found several students gathered around a 4-point buck. I noticed a belt lying next to the deer, and when I asked about it, one student told me they had tried to strangle the deer to put it out of its misery. A brief lesson in safety and deer behavior followed, and I told them it was fortunate no one was hurt.

— WCO VICTOR E. ROSA, FLEETVILLE

Uh-Oh!

WASHINGTON — A hunter contacted me during turkey season to tell me he had killed a turkey, tore the tag off of his hunting license and started filling it out, but then got to the space where it asked how many points it had. He was a little confused until he realized he had torn off the wrong tag.

— WCO FRANK LEICHTENBERGER, CLAYSVILLE

Banner Year

LYCOMING — During deer season I checked a dozen bucks with spreads of more than 20 inches. One hunter said he had bagged a spring gobbler, a gobbler in the fall, a bear, and then a big buck.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT,
MONTICELLO

Didn't Beat Around the Bush

CLEARFIELD — During antlerless deer season Deputy Jerry Himes and I, while responding to a call about someone road hunting, pulled up behind a vehicle parked on the side of the road in the area where the violation had allegedly occurred. A man got out of the vehicle and said that he and his father-in-law were riding down the road when he spotted a deer, got out and shot it (he was standing 60 yards from a residence), then dragged it down so his father-in-law could tag it. The man added, "Oh by the way, I do have a doe license." We're not used to such truthfulness when dealing with violators.

— WCO DAVID L. STEWART, DUBOIS



Rare Occurrence

HUNTINGDON — While trapping turkeys to transfer to the Southeast Region we caught one flock that had three birds with nice beards. Nothing unusual about that except that all three were hens.

— WCO JOHN B. ROLLER, HUNTINGDON

Welcome Back

WAYNE — When 77-year-old Carl Bell announced he was giving up hunting, the guys in the Boydes Mills Hunting Club encouraged him to hunt one more season. In his "final" year Carl bagged a 7-point buck with a 22-inch spread. As I was leaving Carl's camp after checking the trophy, I asked him if I would see him hunting with the guys next year. "You can count on that, Frank," he said.

— WCO FRANK J. DOOLEY, TYLER HILL

What are the Odds?

POTTER — A 36-pound roadkilled bobcat near Austin turned out to be the largest I had ever seen, and while on my way to pick up that one I spotted another sitting along Route 144 near Oleona. The bobcat had been intently watching the roadbank for rodents, and I was able to drive within 25 yards of it before it leaped across the road and scrambled up the other bank.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE,
CROSS FORKS

Gratifying

BUCKS — I won a case against a drunk driver who had a blood alcohol content more than twice the legal limit, and when his wife pulled me aside and said, "Officer, thank you for stopping my husband before it was too late," it made my day.

— WCO WILLIAM F. DINGMAN III,
FOUNTAINVILLE

Habitat

We now have more than 850 acres of warm season grasses established on SGL 280 at Blue Marsh. Since the Game Commission purchased the land in the early '70s, our wild pheasant population decreased to a point where we didn't see or hear of any broods on the entire 6,000 acres. Now, Food & Cover foreman Dave Zimmerman, reports seeing many broods on the area.

— LMO MATTHEW D. BELDING, PITMAN

Quote of the Day

McKEAN — During doe season we were watching a man dressed in hunting garb who had been slowly driving on a rural road with his window down. The man stopped us and asked, "When you're road hunting, how far off the road do you have to be before you can shoot?" The man was serious, too, and, unfortunately, this is how some people hunt. Road hunters are certainly a minority, but they make it look bad for all hunters.

— WCO LEN GROSHEK, SMETHPORT



Adaptable

CLARION — Last winter I noticed carryover stocked pheasants that were making a living on SGL 283 by using some fallen treetops for cover and surviving on burdock seeds. These are the "sticky burrs" that hitch a ride on our pant legs and on dogs' ears. The pheasants picked apart the burrs to get to the small seeds inside.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Could be Lurking Anywhere

DAUPHIN — At our monthly meeting Deputy John Flory became entangled with an angry, truck-grabbing tree stump in the parking lot that would not allow him to move forward or backward. And I thought a conservation officer's adventures were found only in the wild places.

— WCO MARK FAIR, MIDDLETOWN

Blast from the Past

BRADFORD — I was looking through some items that belonged to Joe Leiendecker (now deceased), who was a member of the first class at the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, and found this poem:

The Stranger

Who's that stranger, mother dear?

Look! He knows us! Ain't that queer?

Hush my dear! The mother smiled,

That's your father, dearest child!

That's my father? Not at all,

For father died, you know, last fall!

Father didn't die, my dear

Hunting season came again last year,

And it's closed this spring so he has no place to go, you see.

No place is left for him to roam,

That is why he's come back home.

Kiss him, he won't bite you child,

All game protectors look that wild.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Foiled Burglary

WAYNE — A hunter in Lake Township told me that while he was field-dressing his buck, he heard a sound behind him and was confronted by a large bear that began stomping its front feet and popping its teeth. The hunter backed off and watched as the bear picked up the deer like a rag doll and began to run off with it. The man yelled at the bear and it dropped the deer and backed off, allowing the hunter to recover his buck.

— WCO DONALD R. SCHAUER, HONESDALE

High-Tech

SOMERSET — During the late muzzleloader season I checked a father and son from Texas hunting on SGL 50 who said they had purchased their hunting licenses on-line. The father was amazed at how easy it was and how quickly they had received them, and he commented that the amount of land open to public hunting here is well worth the nonresident license fee.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Variety

The Susquehanna River was frozen solid in January, but one day on a large area of open water near Haldeman Island I spotted more than 200 ducks and geese. In the group were mallards, black ducks, goldeneyes, canvasbacks, ring-necked ducks, redheads, common mergansers, scaup, buffleheads and Canada geese.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

Got Your Name on It

SCHUYLKILL — Deputies Jim Koons and Dave Fidler and I were erecting new wood duck nest boxes when we noticed a few of the boxes were homemade and not the standard Game Commission design. While placing wood shavings inside one box, I noticed the name Michael Anderson inscribed in it. Well, Mike, your box is now nest box 12 and in a marsh on Swatara State Park. Thanks to all those concerned folks who help us help wildlife by donating time and materials.

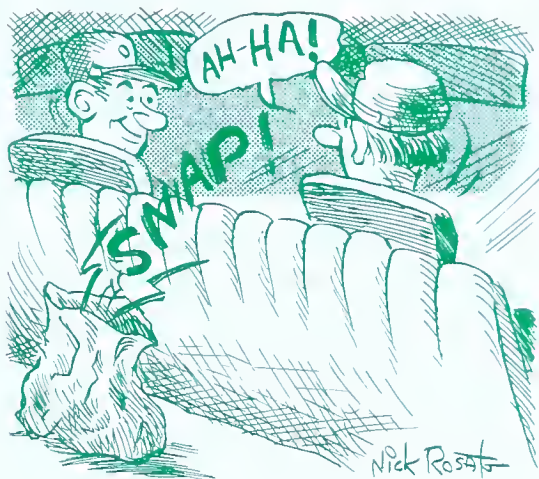
— WCO STEVE HOWER, PINE GROVE



Not Picky

On a game lands here in the Northwest Region we saw evidence of porcupines chewing such things as old tires, plastic pipe, aluminum signs and pressure treated lumber. I'm not sure what nutritional benefit the "porky" gains from these items, though; perhaps it promotes good oral hygiene.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE



Ouch!

MONROE — Everytime Deputy Greg Gorski rides with my neighboring officer WCO Victor Rosa, Greg notices that some of his goodies in his lunch container disappear. Greg took care of the situation, however, by setting a mousetrap in the bag. Hey, Vic, I guess that's how the trap got its name Victor.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Thought I Heard Them All

YORK — Deputies Ronald and Richard Snell spotted a hunter working his way down a field toward the road not wearing the required amount of fluorescent orange. When confronted, the hunter said that he takes his orange off when he gets close to the road because people in the area don't like hunters and they may try to intentionally hit him with their vehicle.

— WCO G.C. HOUGHTON, EMIGSVILLE

Unbelievable

HUNTINGDON — During buck season I cited a man who was with his young son in a baited area and neither were wearing any fluorescent orange. The comment from the boy had me shaking my head. He said, "I wanted my first citation to come from the State Police not the Game Commission." It all comes down to parents setting a good example.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

Turkey trap-and-transfer to southeast

THE GAME Commission, in partnership with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), is conducting a trap-and-transfer project to bolster wild turkey populations in southeastern Pennsylvania. The project was recommended by Game Commissioner Stephen L. Mohr of Lancaster.

"Although small flocks of turkeys exist in a few areas in southeastern Pennsylvania, the forested areas are fragmented, which makes it difficult for the birds to move or disperse into other suitable habitats," said Mary Jo Casalena, PGC turkey biologist.

Plans call for up to 20 turkeys to be released at 10 or so release sites in Turkey Management Area 9A. Release sites were selected using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology that assesses habitat quality. WCOs, Land Managers and Casalena conducted field evaluations of these areas as part of the site selection process. So

far, 16 turkeys have been released in Berks County; 47 in Chester County; 20 in Lancaster and 47 in York. Birds are being released on both public and private lands, with public lands and private properties enrolled in the Game Commission cooperative landowner program receiving the highest priority.

Casalena said most of the turkeys are being captured on lands closed to hunting, including private land where landowners have given the Game Commission permission to trap birds.

"We are planning to capture and release at least three hens for every adult male," Casalena said. "Since one tom will mate with several hens during the spring breeding season and females are responsible for all of the nesting and poult raising duties, it is important that more hens are released than toms. The higher proportion of hens being released will give the tur-

keys a better chance of producing enough birds to establish themselves in the new habitats."

"The National Wild Turkey Federation is proud to be a part of this turkey release," said Rob Keck, NWTF CEO.

WCOs BILL WILLIAMS, left, Perry County, and JEFF MOCK, Mifflin County, untangle a turkey from a cannon net. The bird was one of 20 released in Lancaster County.

Larissa Rose



With Southeast Region Director **BARRY MOORE** looking on, Lancaster County WCO **LINDA SWANK** gets ready to release one of the 20 birds released in the county in February.



Larissa Rose

"Since 1985, our volunteers have poured over \$2 million into wild turkey management in Pennsylvania. Working with the Game Commission, our volunteers have helped purchase over 19,000 acres of land and conducted habitat improvement projects on over 256,000 acres of public lands. They have established and maintained over 2,600 acres of wildlife openings and contributed significantly to the

purchase of equipment and the education of our youth."

To protect the released turkeys, the Board of Game Commissioners voted to close the fall turkey season in TMA 9A for 2001.

Dauphin County man convicted in deer case

SHANE BORDNER SR., 29, of Williamstown was found guilty by District Justice Rebecca Margerum on February 15, of unlawfully taking and possessing an antlered deer and making a false or fraudulent statement to a law enforcement officer. Border was ordered to pay \$700 in fines.

According to charges filed by WCO Mike Doherty, on November 27, Bordner took a 14-year-old boy hunting. When the boy (whose name is being withheld by the Game Commission) killed his first-ever buck, Bordner put the deer in his vehicle and brought it to his home. Bordner then had the deer butchered, but refused to give the boy any of the meat or even the 4-point antlers.

On December 16, WCO Doherty and Deputy WCOs Barry Everly and Fred Hanosky, assisted by Fish and Boat Commission Deputy Waterways

Conservation Officer Doug Deppen, served a search warrant at Bordner's apartment building. During the search, the antlers and a little of the meat were found. Bordner then gave officers a false sworn-statement regarding the killing of the deer.

WCO Doherty later provided the boy and his mother with venison from a doe confiscated from a poaching incident. The antlers, which were held as evidence pending the trial, were returned to the boy after the case was settled.

"Part of the Game Commission's mission is to preserve Pennsylvania's rich hunting and trapping heritage," Doherty said. "While I am pleased that this case was brought to a successful conclusion, I hope that this unfortunate encounter hasn't discouraged this young man from hunting in the future."

PGC officers make Governor's Top 20

IN 2000, for the second consecutive year, Game Commission WCOs made up a quarter of the law enforcement officers who placed on the Governor's Twenty. The quintet of WCOs was Skip Littwin, David Carlini, Steven Bernardi, Guy Hansen and Gary Packard. Littwin had an average of 1478.6-77.6x in qualifying for the Governor's Twenty for the 13th consecutive year. He placed seventh overall. Packard who, like Littwin, is assigned to the commission's Bureau of Law Enforcement in Harrisburg, made the list for the 10th time, with an average of 1462.6-70.3x. He was 17th overall.

Carlini, a Clearfield County WCO, ranked 10th, with an average of 1474-

77.6x. Bernardi, a Land Management Group Supervisor in the Southcentral Region, placed 14th, with an average of 1469.3-74.3x. Hansen, a York County WCO, placed 15th on the list, with an average of 1468-69.3x. All were repeats from the 1999 Governor's Twenty list.

The makeup of the Governor's Twenty includes officers from federal, state and municipal law enforcement departments, U.S. Customs Service, FBI, state Department of Corrections, and AMTRAK.

Packard also this year earned state champion honors in the Pennsylvania Police Combat Association individual open semi-automatic pistol category, shooting an average of 479-34.3x.

Many big game scoring sessions remain

STILL HAVE A BIG Pennsylvania white-tailed deer or black bear trophy you would like to have measured and entered into the Game Commission's official big game records?

While several sessions have already been held, quite a few remain. Follow-

ing is the schedule of the upcoming big game scoring sessions. Those with the top deer and bear trophies will be honored at the fall meeting of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association, being held in DuBois the weekend of September 22.

Southwest Region: April 7, beginning at 8:30 a.m., National Guard Armory, Main Street, Ligonier (across from the Southwest Region Office).

Northwest Region: March 31, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. (or until we run out of trophies to score), Rocky Grove Fire Hall. Take Route 417 north out of Franklin, make a right turn at the blinking light. The fire hall is on the left.

Northcentral Region: March 31, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Elk County, St. Marys Middle School and, also March 31, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., in Lycoming County, the Northcentral Region Office, off Route 44, 1½ miles south of Jersey Shore.

Southeast Region: April 22 & 29, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area Visitor Center. Middle Creek is on SGL 46, on the Lancaster/Lebanon County line, just south of Kleinfeltersville.

Northeast Region: April 7, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Dallas Middle School Gym, off Route 309 north on Hildebrandt Road.

Landowners encouraged to enroll in CREP

FARMERS in the lower Chesapeake Bay drainage area are encouraged to enroll in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) designed to improve water quality and reduce soil erosion. CREP is focused on enrolling for 10 to 15 years 100,000 acres of highly erodible cropland and buffers within 180 feet of streams in a 20-county region of southcentral and southeastern Pennsylvania.

Eligible land must have a cropping history or be marginal pasture. Land must be planted with conservation cover, such as native warm-season grasses, cool-season grasses and legumes, or trees and shrubs. Participants are offered annual rental payments (rates vary by county and soil type, but range from about \$55 to \$200 per acre), with the possibility of a one-time bonus payment for implementing certain conservation practices, such as riparian forest buffers, grass filter strips or creating wetlands. Landowners also receive up to 100 percent cost-share for installing such practices.

CREP does not target our best farmland; instead, it focuses on those lands in most need of conservation.

"Although this program will influence less than three percent of the farmland in the 20 eligible counties,

it can positively influence water quality, recovery of declining wildlife populations and farm income," said Scott Klinger, PGC farmland wildlife biologist. "This program is entirely voluntary and will work only if farmers and landowners participate."

Enrollment for CREP began on June 1, 2000, and will remain open until September 30, 2002, or until the 100,000-acre cap is reached. So far, more than 1,000 landowners have enrolled 30,679 acres. Landowners interested in enrolling in CREP may contact the USDA Service Center in their county, which is listed in the telephone book blue pages.

"With state Rep. Ed Staback and U.S. Congressman Tim Holden championing the legislative effort for CREP, organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and other state, federal and private agencies all are playing an important role," said PGC Executive Director Vern Ross. "These individuals and groups recognize that improving small game hunting opportunities is key to preserving Pennsylvania's hunting heritage. They also recognize that improving soil conservation, water quality and wildlife habitat are not mutually exclusive, but can be accomplished together for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians."

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program

YOUNGSTERS from across the state are about to test their knowledge of wildlife habitat at the Pennsylvania 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Contest. The event, part of the "4-H Wildlife Field Day" will be held on Saturday April 21, 2001, at Rock Springs Agricultural Research Center near State College.

This state competition consists of four parts: Participants must identify wildlife foods and specify which animals use them; interpret and judge habitat types on aerial photographs; prescribe specific wildlife management practices to a given tract of land for several wildlife species; and develop an actual wildlife management plan for a rural land tract.

These activities are based on the fundamental concepts of wildlife management.

Those achieving the top four scores at the state level will unite as a team to represent Pennsylvania at the National 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Invitational in Wyoming in July.



TEAM MEMBERS left to right: Jody Groshek (coach), Tiffany Bosworth, Ashlee Earley, James Dolan, Merrylee Grosso, and WCO Len Groshek (coach).

Pennsylvania was well represented at the 2000 national WHEP competition in Townsend, Tennessee, near the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. The team, consisting of Tiffany Bosworth (Smethport), James Dolan (Warren), Ashlee Earley (Huntingdon), and Merrylee Grosso (Landisburg), placed sixth overall while competing with teams from 23 other states.

Len and Jody Groshek, 4-H volunteer leaders from Smethport, coached the four teens. Len is also a WCO in McKean County. The 2000 National WHEP event was sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Champion International, and the National Rifle Association. The Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Penn State School of Forest Resources sponsored the team's travel to Tennessee.

Participants in this program, both at the state and national level, learn about wildlife and wildlife management techniques. They also gain practical experience managing land for wildlife.

The WHEP judging competition is available to youngsters ages 12 to 19; an educational "exploration program" is also available for youngsters ages 8 through 12. The program is administered by Penn State's School of Forest Resources, through Penn State Cooperative Extension. Participants must be 4-H members and must register for the event through their 4-H office. All youngsters ages 8 through 19 are eligible to participate in 4-H programs through their county's Cooperative Extension office.

OH 2001 receives commission support

THE PENNSYLVANIA Board of Commissioners approved \$5,000 for Outdoor Heritage 2001, to be held on May 3-5 at the Huntingdon County Fairgrounds.

The Outdoor Heritage celebration is a cooperative project involving the Game Commission and the Westsylvania Heritage Corporation (formerly the Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation). Displays by more than 80 exhibitors last year revealed the diversity of support for the outdoors. Conservation organizations, state agencies, and other groups provided information to the public about the tremendous outdoor opportunities on public and private land.

"The first year's 2-day event attracted approximately 12,000 people, including many students," said Vern Ross. "Due to the overwhelming response, the May event will be ex-

tended an additional day." The Game Commission will also be providing technical guidance and staff support for the event. Admission and parking are free.

The Outdoor Heritage event is a direct sequel to the Governor's Symposium on North America's Hunting Heritage, hosted by Gov. Tom Ridge in Hershey in 1998.

Other funding has been pledged by Rep. Larry Sather, \$20,000 in state funds; National Wild Turkey Federation, \$5,000; Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Alliance, \$5,000; Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, \$5,000; National Rifle Association Foundation, \$3,000; Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, \$3,000; Pennsylvania Performing Arts Tour, \$780; and the Conservation Officers Association of Pennsylvania, \$500.

Hunters Sharing the Harvest receives boost

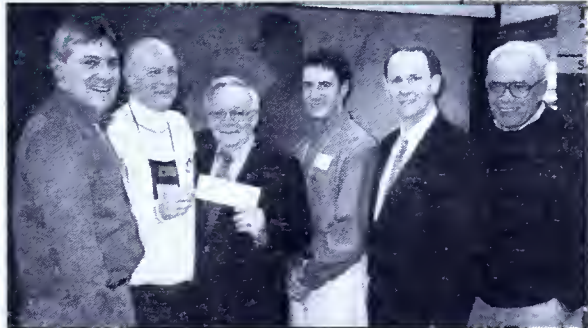
CRAIG KAUFFMAN, below left, President of the Susquehannock Chapter of Safari Club International presents a \$300 grant to Hunters Sharing the Harvest Coordinator Ken Brandt. Below right, Ottie Snyder,

John Plowman



second from left, on behalf of the Amercian Crossbow Federation, presents \$1,500 to HSTH. Also pictured are Dave Messics, left, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Anderson and Brandt, Dennis McGraw, RMEF, Hon. Sam Hayes, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, and John Plowman, PGC Special Projects Manager. Funds will be used to pay processing costs for venison donated to food banks and other needy agencies.

John Plowman



2000 Youth Essay Contest winners announced

AS GRAND prize winners in the Game Commission's 2000 Hunter Education Essay Contest, Cory Ammerman, Alexandria, and Hallie Groff, Wernersville, are making summer travel plans.

Ammerman emerged as the grand prize winner in the junior category (ages 12-15) and will attend Safari Club International's (SCI) Apprentice Hunter Camp at the YO Ranch in Texas. Groff was the grand prize recipient in the senior category (ages 16-18) and will attend SCI's American Wilderness Leadership School in Jackson, Wyoming. Pennsylvania Chapters of Safari Club International are sponsoring both trips.

The theme of the 2000 contest was "What I Enjoy Most About Hunting." Nearly 400 youngsters from throughout Pennsylvania submitted essays for the contest.

"To ensure that Pennsylvania's

hunting heritage continues to flourish, we must encourage more young people to share their hunting experiences with their peers," said Keith A. Snyder, Hunter-Trapper Education Division chief. "This essay contest offers our younger hunters a forum to express their views on being a responsible hunter, as well as the enjoyment they get from hunting."

Besides the grand prize trips, other contest prizes included: two-day pheasant hunts at a western Pennsylvania shooting preserve with overnight accommodations sponsored by Marlin Firearms and H&R 1871 Inc.; Browning compound bows; Buck commemorative hunting knives; and Sightron binoculars.

Junior Division Winners: Grand Prize: Cory Ammerman, Alexandria; 1st Place: Derek Ross, Aleppo; 2nd Place: Adam Greathouse, Tionesta; 3rd Place: Lindsey Stauffer, Lititz; and 4th Place: James Bradley, Mars.

Senior Division Winners: Grand Prize: Hallie Groff, Wernersville; 1st Place: Matthew Stonecypther, Johnstown; 2nd Place: Robert Cushman, Pottstown; 3rd Place: David W. Rose, II, New Bloomfield; and 4th Place: Isaac Lopp, Newville.

Joe Osman



Winners present at the Youth Essay awards ceremony held during the January Commission meeting are, L-R, DEREK ROSS, ADAM GREATHOUSE, HALLIE GROFF, ROBERT CUSHMAN, MATTHEW STONECYPHER and CORY AMMERMAN.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

"What I Enjoy Most About Hunting"

AS THE MOON is setting and the sun is rising, I can hear the coyotes howling in the distance. I look up and see the stars, but I know they won't be there for very long. The big buck is going to come this morning.

As I sit waiting for the monster buck to come, I think about many things. I think about how nature works and how everything takes its course in life. I always enjoy getting into my treestand well before daylight so I can enjoy the moonlight and the stars. The forest comes alive bright and early in the morning. I love all of the entertainment that the squirrels give me when they chase each other. They are very amusing. Even if I don't get anything, it really doesn't matter to me because I can't expect to get something every time. That's why it is called hunting.

What I really like about hunting is being with my dad. It has helped me build a close relationship with him. My mother died of cancer when I was 12, and I didn't really think much about the circle of life until then. My dad taught me all there is to know about hunting and the woods. At the same time, I have learned about respect for animals and their surroundings. I have enjoyed spending much of my free time hunting and sharing many good times with my dad. My hunting experience has helped me draw a close relationship with him.

I believe that I will be a lifelong hunter and outdoorswoman. I hope some day to share all of my experiences with and teach my children as well as I have been taught. — *Hallie E. Groff, Senior Grand Prize Winner*

MY TIMES in the Pennsylvania woods and fields have been some of the most rewarding times I've spent, even though I am only 12 years old and this is my first year of hunting.

Hunting to me is freedom, peace, contentment, happiness, joy, sweat, hiking, being tired, being happy, being frustrated, challenging and many other things. Hunting is all there for anyone to discover themselves and the world around them. How many nonhunters have gotten up before daybreak just to watch the sunrise or sat against an oak tree watching a squirrel or flock of turkeys feeding and just be content to observe without being seen.

To me hunting is not the act of killing an animal but being there and taking part in nature and learning things firsthand, not from a book, not from television or media accounts, but being there and seeing firsthand and learning for myself. My father began taking me along on hunting trips when I was about six years old and teaching me the safe handling of firearms and hunter safety. He showed me how to safely handle firearms and never made them something I was not allowed near, but taught me to respect them for what they are. Many days we would come home from hunting and say, "What a great day that was," even though we had not bagged anything, for time spent together hunting is truly quality time, and as years pass, the memories of times hunting will be with me wherever I go or whatever I choose to do with my life.

In today's society there are many kids who do not hunt and never will, most likely they have never been introduced to hunting. I for one am grateful that I was. — *Cory M. Ammerman, Junior Grand Prize Winner*

Another View

By Linda Steiner

A common misconception among some hunters is that bigger is better. Their choosing a powerful magnum for deer hunting could be an attempt to overcome the fact that they haven't put in the time to become proficient in their shooting.

The Right Bullet

FLY FISHERMEN can get fanatical over having the right fly. As a fly angler myself, I can tell you that having the right combination of feathers and fur, in the correct color, shape and size, on the end of the line can go a long way toward fooling a trout. But the right fly isn't the answer to all of a fisherman's prayers.

I'm glad I started fishing with worms. I've learned the great importance of bait presentation, staying out of sight of the fish, casting accurately, and getting a drag-free drift. Sometimes there was a right bait, but more often it was knowing the stream, understanding where and how fish feed, and learning how to get the bait there that made for success. When I eased into fly-

fishing, I understood that if trout were rising to March brown mayflies, it helped to have a March Brown artificial fly on my line, but not if I couldn't fish it well.

Some people jump directly into fly-fishing without the solid background of bait fishing that I had. I feel sorry for them. They missed the lessons about reading the water, the trout and proper presentation, and hurried into something they thought would make up for their shortcomings — the right fly. Believing that finding the right fly is all you need to do to catch fish is a trap. When the catching is poor, these misled fishermen rummage through fly boxes crammed with too many flies. The truly good fly anglers fish a handful of proven fly patterns, fish them well, and take a lot of trout. They practice an effective method and don't look for the quick fix.

Change the words "the right fly" to "the right bullet" or even "the

Bob Steiner



IF A HUNTER doesn't hit the deer or didn't place the shot into the kill area, it hardly matters if the bullet was a 130-grain, 150-grain, 180-grain or other weight, or whether it was a spitzer, round nose, flat nose, semi-pointed or hollow point.

right cartridge,” and the same could be said for hunters and hunting situations. I was thinking of this the evening before last buck season, when the group that gathers at our house for opening day was telling camp tales. One was saying that he wasn’t happy with the way his rifle load performed on deer. He thought the bullets weren’t mushrooming properly. He’d recovered some, hardly expanded, from carcasses. Others had made entrance and exit holes similar in size, as they passed through. But he liked the ballistics and accuracy and wasn’t eager to change. Another friend laughed and said, “You just want to keep using those cartridges because they match the rifle, black and silver.” I remembered his gun had a black fiberglass stock and stainless steel barrel, and that his rifle loads were silver and black. “Go to a heavier bullet and quit fooling around,” the friend told him. “Color doesn’t count.”

The hunter with the fancy rifle certainly didn’t choose the load because it matched the colors of his gun, but that was a pleasing plus. Having the right cartridge for deer hunting isn’t about getting things color coordinated, although I do like the shiny gold-tone of polished brass. It has to do with bullet weight, velocity, trajectory, foot pounds of energy, and more.

Talking about the fine points of rifle loads is better done by Don Lewis and other experts elsewhere in *Game News*. That’s not my story here. I’m only peripherally involved in reloading, because my spouse is active in that pastime. He’ll ask me which load I want for my .30-06, and I’ll ask what have I been using lately; that seems to work well. He’ll answer the 150-grain spitzers are what I’ve been shooting. I remember their accuracy on the range, their effectiveness on deer — not too light of a load and not too overpowering — and I say, yeah, load me some more of those. That’s about as involved as I get.

But I listen. Some hunters just use “old reliable” loads (I’m in that category), while others like to experiment, looking for just

the “right stuff.” From what I see, the cartridges are a combination of bullet design and weight and enough powder to give the desired “oomph.” On game, the bullet should “mushroom,” the lead peeling back over the copper jacket so what remains indeed resembles a mushroom. Most of the energy should be expended within the animal’s body. Sounds a little graphic, but that’s the way to a quick kill.

An “edgy” load might zip the bullet right through, not expanding properly. Or the bullet of an inappropriate load might fragment when it hits the outer hide or bone, not entering the body in one piece. But within the acceptable range of loads for the caliber are several that will do the job. Then it’s hunter’s choice, influenced, perhaps, by the distance he’ll be shooting and the size of the game. The difference can be marginal, like that between tying on a size 10 or 12 March Brown dry fly.

A fly fisherman might blame his not having a size 12 in his fly box — “All I had with me were 10s!” — for his inability to take trout. This is often an excuse for lack of skill in other aspects of the sport. To me, “the right bullet” means much more than just choosing the correct load for the rifle.

If a hunter misses or doesn’t place the shot into the kill zone, it hardly matters if the bullet was a 130-grain, 150-grain or 180-grain, or whether it was a spitzer, round nose, flat nose, semi-pointed or hollow point. The shooter didn’t get the bullet in right; the shape, size and weight weren’t the problem. If a fly angler doesn’t lay that size 12 March Brown down lightly, just a bit upstream of where the trout are rising, all the fly tying expertise that went into that fly, and all the exactness of the color to match the real thing aren’t going to matter. Slap the cast down clumsily and the fish is gone.

No rifle load is a brush-cutter or can shoot through tree limbs. During the antlerless season my shot pierced a foot-high accumulation of snow on a log. I must have dropped a little on the offhand shot,

but I still made a good hit on the button buck. When I looked back up the hill to where I'd shot from, I saw the neat, round hole in the snow. I wouldn't have deliberately shot through the snow, not knowing where the snow ended and the log began, or whether there was hard ice underneath. I'd have held my shot and waited.

The "right bullet" is the one that is not let loose until the hunter has what he believes is a safe, high-percentage opportunity for a quick kill. This is a combination of self-control and the reasoning/intuition of knowing when the animal is positioned to present a good shot. A hunter has to visualize the bullet's pathway not only to, but also through the animal. The question is: "With the deer standing as it is, what sight picture through my scope do I need to get the bullet to the heart/lung area?" I've sometimes had to place a bullet just ahead of the hindquarters, for it to travel

through the ribcage into the vitals. The bullet's exit hole was through the chest. In this case, the advice to "aim just behind the shoulder" doesn't work, because the right bullet route through the body required something else.

I believe that in angling, the small detail of fly choice isn't as important as the larger concern of using the best fishing methods. For me, the right fly is usually one of four — a Blue-Winged Olive, a Sulfur, a Hairwing Caddis, or a Brown Comparadun. I've caught more trout on those flies than all the rest combined. I've settled on these tested patterns, and I know when, where and how to use them. I've long ago abandoned the false-leads of chasing down the right fly and took on the more solid job of learning to fish well. Carrying that over to hunting, you might say it isn't so much getting the right bullet as getting the bullet right. □

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The Naturalist's Eye

By Marcia Bonta

Leave it to a youngster to revive a passion for the outdoors and make one feel young again.

Passing the Torch

FOUR-YEAR-OLD EVA, after almost a year in Honduras, came to us for a 5-week visit last spring.

"She's forgotten most of her English," her father Mark warned. He had continued to speak English to her, but her mother, Luz, and grandmother, Clara, who were also visiting, conversed with her in rapid-fire Spanish.

How could I possibly communicate with this beloved only granddaughter? No problem, it turned out. We both love nature and the outdoors. And because of a then undiagnosed painful condition, my slow pace easily fit hers.

Every nice day I hoisted my pack, filled with animal crackers and juice for her and a granola bar and tea for me, and set off for a short walk. First she renewed her acquaintanceship with "moss," a word she remembered from her last visit, 15 months previously, stooping frequently to stroke our moss-covered trails. Then she extended her interest to the acorns that still littered our

trail, filling her pockets with them. Garlic mustard had sprung up in waste places, so I crumbled the shiny, green leaves and let her sniff the garlic odor.

From moss to acorn to garlic mustard, she progressed to ants. Like a small bear, she turned over every rock along the trails, and we both squatted down to watch dozens of ants scurrying to protect their eggs. She never tired of this pastime, especially because so many other critters also live under rocks: small black beetles, insect larvae, earthworms, millipedes and others I couldn't identify. No creature was too repulsive for her to pick up and examine. One day she even spent an hour playing happily with a wiggly, worm-like larva she had



found in rotting bark on the ground.

Our slow, careful examination of the minute led to other discoveries. On April 6 we spotted a female white-breasted nuthatch making her nest in a red maple tree cavity. For nearly an hour we sat in the woods and watched her zip from tree hole to nearby trees, where she stripped off bark to line her cavity nest.

The following day Eva and I walked down to our small, planked, woodland bridge, where she tirelessly threw sticks in the stream and excitedly watched how each one rode the current. She climbed up steep road banks and slid down on her bottom. She balanced her way along fallen logs, only sometimes holding my hand. Fearless and adventuresome, she didn't complain, even when she ended up with wet feet. As she played, she composed songs about what she was doing, which she sang in Spanish at first. But within a few days, forced to communicate about what she loved best — the outdoors — she was speaking broken English to me.

A long spell of bad weather kept us close to home until Easter, a blustery day with intermittent sunshine. That afternoon Eva accompanied me outside in her ankle-length Easter dress, topped by her red winter jacket. Almost immediately we spotted a male American kestrel on the electric wire, resplendently clad in rufous and silver, his tail dipping slowly as he peered alertly around.

Eva chased the first cabbage white butterflies fluttering over the field and picked the first dandelions. To her, what I considered alien, intrusive species, were wondrous.

But everyone was entranced by our resident female bear, accompanied by her three, year-old cubs, playing in the corner of First Field. We rushed out on the veranda to watch. Eva and her grandmother Clara were especially thrilled, but Eva's excited cries sent the bears up into the woods. Still, I was pleased to learn that mama bear and her cubs had made it

through the winter. Instead of the Easter bunny, we had Easter bears.

Late in April I introduced Eva to salamanders. As usual, she was turning over rocks, this time along the edge of our road. One particularly enormous rock that she heaved up yielded a sluggish, leadback variant of the redback salamander. It sat obligingly in her hand and she wanted to keep it, or at least play with it, but I explained that it needed to stay damp or it would die. Reluctantly, after we examined it under the hand lens, she returned it to its home beneath the rock. The second salamander, a northern dusky, moved much faster and disappeared into the ground before she could grab it. But "salamander" also entered her vocabulary, and looking for salamanders became another popular pastime.

On a spectacular first of May, I packed more snack food than usual and we headed for the Norway spruce grove. Uphill through First Field for nearly half a mile, it was the longest walk we had taken. But, as I suspected, the dark grove, with its child-size passages beneath the overhanging limbs, fascinated her. So, too, did the dozens of owl pellets we found. She carefully pulled several apart, sorting the tiny bones and skulls of the owl's prey. Then she stuffed the pack with them because, like most children, she has a strong collecting instinct.

I also took her to see the Allegheny mound-building ants at work. The 2-foot high mound had been erected out in the open between two Norway spruces. The ants (*Formica exsectoides*) build in an open, sunny spot to protect the mound from moss, which would gradually engulf the mound and smother the ants beneath.

The colony of as many as 50,000 red and black ants is headed by a fertile queen and consists mostly of sterile workers and some males. As we watched, dozens of workers scurried up and down the mound, carrying more debris to pile on top of the structure. Then, several banded together to haul a dead caterpillar up the mound and into an entrance hole.

The constant activity kept Eva entertained for a long time, but I finally pried her away to sit in the grove and listen to the crows. They had built their large, coarse nest in a spruce tree above our heads, but the branches were so thick that we couldn't see it. We could, however, hear the squalling cries and calls of the nestlings, the answering calls from their parents, and even watch the parents fly in and out. Or, perhaps the adults were also siblings of the nestlings helping out, because, according to Dr. Kevin J. McGowan, a Cornell University ecologist who spends most spring days up in trees that contain crows' nests, as many as five years of offspring may stay near the parental nest to help out during breeding season. Crows mate for life and have strong family ties, he says. Beneath the nest tree we ate our picnic in silence, not wanting to scare the nestlings or the adults. And Eva learned still another word — crow.

Around home she had a daily routine that consisted of checking out the eastern phoebe nest in the garage, picking bouquets of daffodils and then lilacs, and looking for deer tracks in the spring mud, all of which reminded me of Whitman's poem,

"There was a child went forth every day
And the first object he look'd upon, that
object he became,

And that object became part of him for
the day or a certain part of the day,

Or for many years or stretching cycles
of years."

Together we saw the first ruby-throated hummingbird of the year, and a scarlet tanager in the lilac bush. With my husband, Bruce, she saw her first box turtle and a hen turkey on its nest. But looking for sala-

manders in our small, child-size stream, remained her favorite pastime. Clad in rubber boots, she easily walked down the rock-strewn streambed with me one brilliant day. We caught three mountain dusky salamanders, including one with a gold stripe down its back.

Mostly, though, she exulted in the beauty of the stream environment, once spreading her arms wide and crying exuberantly, "This is beautiful. This must be Africa!"

Why Africa, I wondered, until I remembered that I read her books about wildlife, and the most glamorous animals — elephants and lions — lived in Africa. Somehow, in her mind, Africa had become a wondrous place. Often, like a

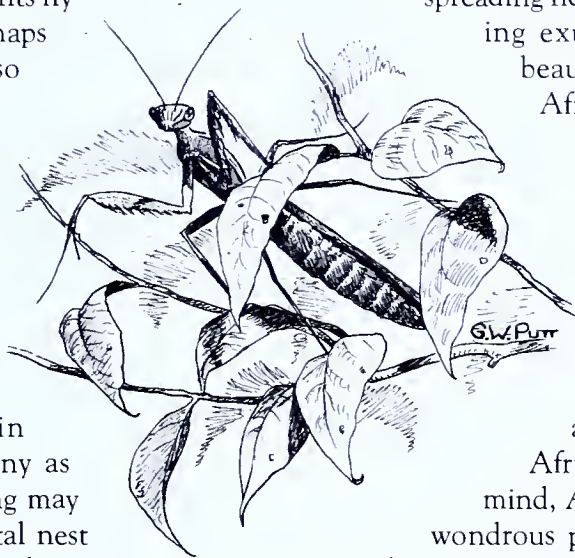
small opera star, she expressed her happiness in a singing dialogue about what she was doing, only this time she sang exclusively in English.

On the seventh of May, the last day of her visit, it was unseasonably hot. This time we went down to the stream to cool off. Eva sat in the water, playing in the mud, looking under rocks, and building pools while I sat on the bank and soaked my feet in the cold water. Both of us got deliciously wet and muddy. My pain receded and I felt young again.

The following day I helped her fill her wheeled backpack with her favorite books and toys. At the train station she bumped her backpack down the steps behind her father. Then she turned to say goodbye.

"What will you do without your girl?" she asked.

But that parting was not as difficult as others had been. I knew she would be returning in four months to live nearby for a year while her father finished writing his



dissertation. And so she did, this time in a car in which she had ridden with her parents all the way from Honduras. They had arrived late in the evening, but the following morning Eva was up and eager to search for salamanders and walk in the field that had turned from green to gold during her absence. We spent hours looking at the insects on the goldenrod, the mating, pink-legged locust borers, ladybug beetles, big, fat bumblebees, and an unusually high population of praying mantises. And, as soon as she could, she dragged me up to the spruce grove in search of the Allegh-

eny mound-building ants.

She insisted on collecting several of the insects, putting them in jars with food and air and taking them to her preschool to show the other students. The praying mantis was a big hit. So were the locust borers and ladybug beetles.

I marveled at how far she had come in only a few months, not only improving her English in leaps and bounds, but eager to teach others about the natural world. Maybe getting older wasn't such a bad thing. To see my own passion for the outdoors passed from sons to granddaughter has to be one of life's greatest rewards. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Great Horned Owl Trivia

Read the following statements about great horned owls, and if it's true, place the letter at the end in parentheses in the space provided.

- _____ 1. I am considered the earliest nesting bird in Pennsylvania. (T)
- _____ 2. I am America's largest and most common owl. (I)
- _____ 3. I regurgitate fur and bones of my prey into "pellets." (G)
- _____ 4. I am found even in central Mexico (E)
- _____ 5. I weigh only three pounds despite my 20-inch length. (R)
- _____ 6. My visible "horns" are really my ears. (A)
- _____ 7. My call is *hoo-hoohoo-hoo-hoo*. (O)
- _____ 8. My young can fly in 90 days, depending on the growth of their contour feathers. (F)
- _____ 9. I am the most powerful of all of Pennsylvania's owls. (T)
- _____ 10. My wingspan is about five feet. (H)
- _____ 11. I am silent on the wing when after my prey. (E)
- _____ 12. I mate from December through February. (A)
- _____ 13. I am at least two years old before I mate. (I)
- _____ 14. Skunks are one of my prey species. (R)

What is my nickname? " _____ " _____

answer on p. 64

Straight from the Bowstring

By John Kasun

The array of new stuff for archery enthusiasts is mind-boggling, but with careful shopping and some product comparison, finding just what you need shouldn't be too much of a problem.

The Latest Trends in Archery Equipment

CHRISTMAS comes on December 25 for most people, but for me it comes at the end of January, when the Archery Manufacturers Organization (AMO) trade show is held. The show is a preview of new equipment and improvements, and it's open only to people in the archery business, such as manufacturers, dealers and press. It's a hands-on show, meaning not only do you get to see what's new, but you can also try it out. For anyone involved in archery, it's like being dropped into the middle of Santa's workshop after hours.

While it would be impossible to cover all of the equipment I reviewed in my three days at the show in Indianapolis, here's some of the highlights and trends of what you can expect to see in your local archery shop this year.

Bows

Bows have become so advanced over the past few years that constantly coming up with major improvements has become quite a challenge. This year the focus seems to be on the elimination of in-the-hand shock and vibration.

Matthews, a leading bow manufacturer, has expanded the bows in its line that offer their popular in the handle harmonic

damping and vibration elimination system.

Browning, among others, has designed a vibration dampening system built directly into the limb pocket, stopping limb vibration at the source.

Precision Shooting Equipment (PSE) offers an integrated one-piece limb pocket designed to keep the limb firmly in place and at the precise angle for optimum performance. PSE has joined forces with SIMS — inventors of the popular LimbSaver — to create an innovative bow-mounted vibration reduction system designated the NV System. The NV System is mounted directly to the limb bolt, minimizing vibration and shock before it reaches the riser. The NV System is sold separately and can be added to your current bow.

Most manufacturers have now added the increasingly popular short bows to their line, and bows in the 33- to 34-inch axle to axle length are common. Matthews still offers its popular MQ32 model, but has added a super short SQ2, with an axle to axle length of 31 inches, to this year's line. Bear Archery offers the Borsalino T/D, the world's only takedown compound. It folds at the handle for easy packing into remote areas or for taking on a plane.

Browning Archery has incorporated into their cams a draw length adjustment of between three to five inches in half-inch increments, allowing the shooter to fit virtually any shooting style or anchor point. The draw length can be adjusted without the aid of a bow press, making it easy for a "do it yourselfer." The cam style is also ideally suited for the growing archer, allowing one bow to be adjusted for an increasing draw length over several seasons.

Let-offs between 65 and 80 percent are common on this year's bow models, while machined risers are offered by most manufacturers. While features vary with manufacturer and model, there are bows to fit every need and price range.

While many of the bows for 2001 are similar, one manufacturer has taken an entirely different approach with a bow called the Accu Rest. While not necessarily new, the Accu Rest is being looked at seriously by many bowhunters as a totally different step in the right direction. The Accu Rest is designed around a concept similar to a rifle in that the arrow is actually shot out of a tube. This concept eliminates bow torque and the need for a tunable arrow rest, allowing new archers to shoot better more quickly and experienced shooters to be more accurate.

Bow Sights

Combining innovative design with modern materials and manufacturing processes, manufacturers are moving towards simpler sight design with fewer parts and easy adjustments that won't shake loose. The Spike Millennium sight (by Scout Mountain), weighs a mere three ounces and fills the bill nicely. It's a hunting sight that has all the features a hunter requires, with none of the normal problems.

The fiber optic light gathering sights that came upon the market several years ago are moving up to a new level. Scout Mountain offers a new hybrid neon pin that actually glows in the dark. This means the sight pin will always produce a definite

sighting reference regardless of the changing light conditions often encountered during the legal hours of bowhunting.

TRUGLO, manufacturer of bow and gun optic sights, has taken the Glo pin one step further with the introduction of the Tritium/Fiber optic sight pin. Tritium is a gas that appears dull green under normal light conditions, but becomes fluorescent when shadowed, automatically adjusting to changing light conditions.

Most sight manufacturers offer sight pins of varying diameters to meet specific conditions. Large sight pins for close shots and fine pins for longer shots. The logic is simple: On a close shot accuracy is not as critical as getting the pin on the target quickly, for which a large pin is best suited. The reverse is true for fine pins, which are designed for longer shots where sighting errors must be minimized and pinpoint accuracy is desired.

Broadheads

Never has the number of broadheads to choose from been greater. Broadheads are available in a variety of materials, from aluminum to titanium and from two to six blades. There is something for every situation.

While the trend for mechanical broadheads continues, the fixed blade head is far from dead. Although some new models of mechanical heads were introduced at the show, fixed-bladed and cut-on-impact heads are still getting serious attention from manufacturers. Cut-on-impact heads that must be sharpened by hand are favored by many bowhunters who are after big game, especially elk, moose and African animals. Game Tracker, Steel Force and Simmons were a few of the manufacturers promoting cut-on-impact heads.

While in past years manufacturers were focusing on lighter broadheads, several heavier models in fixed, replaceable and mechanical heads were introduced this year for bowhunters more concerned about penetration than speed.

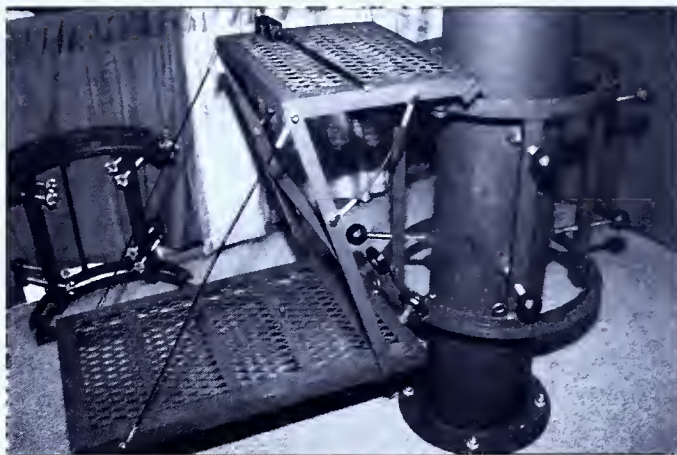
Design combinations are also starting to appear that offer the bowhunter features from several different designs. Cut-on-impact tips are being combined with mechanical main blades in Rocky Mountain's new Snyder and Game Tracker's First Cut EXP heads.

A new broadhead manufacturer known as G5 is out to build better broadheads through the application of a totally new manufacturing process known as MonoFlow. This process allows the head to be formed as one piece without pins, screws or welding. G5 claims this process produces a stronger, more consistent head than those currently on the market. A limited number of models produced by this new process will be available later this year.

Treestands

Just as with most archery equipment, treestands are becoming more refined. Manufacturers such as Summit, Loc On, API and Ol'Man are taking the treestand market to new heights (pardon the pun). The current trend is toward larger more comfortable stands with increased weight carrying capacity. Padded seats, some with padded back supports and armrests have been added to many models. Rifle rest are also common on many stands, so when selecting one make sure the rifle rest can be lowered or removed when the stand is to be used for bowhunting. Stand attachment methods have been refined to the point where no tools are required and there are no knobs or nuts to loose.

Some novel stand innovations are stands designed to fit leaning trees or trees with crooked trunks. The Gametamer is an excellent example of a stand with these features. It not only attaches to virtually any tree, but also features a swivel seat that rotates 360 degrees. Stands of this type are



THE REVOLUTION treestand is mounted on rollers and allows the hunter to "roll" around the tree 360 degrees, covering all angles.

invaluable in situations where the best tree for the shot is the one where it's impossible to attach a conventional stand.

Revolution TreeStands, a new stand manufacturer, has yet another idea. Their stand consists of two major components, a dual ring that mounts around any tree up to 12 inches in diameter and a stand on which are mounted four rollers. Once the dual ring is fastened to the tree the stand and rollers are mounted on the rings. The hunter can sit in the stand and "roll" himself 360 degrees around the tree, being able to shoot from any direction.

For those hunters looking for free standing stands, several manufacturers offer tripods and quad pods complete with rotating seats and camo blinds built in. Although not normally thought of as suitable here in the East, I've found them quite handy. My wife and I use them while hunting clearcuts and swampy areas that offer few, if any, usable trees. Pod stands are solid, comfortable, safe and, if used properly, extremely productive. My wife has taken four deer with a bow in the last three years from one of several pods she uses on a regular basis.

Safety Belts

Safety belts have taken a giant step forward in design when the body harness was



THIS bow blind by Advanish can be attached directly to a bow as shown, used separately as a ground blind or attached to a treestand for additional cover.

introduced. In the past most archers simply used a belt around the waist that was tied to a tree. While better than nothing, it didn't fully protect the wearer and could actually inflict injury in a fall if worn improperly. The body harness fits over the shoulder, around the waist, chest and between the legs, distributing the force generated in a fall over the entire body as opposed to concentrating it around the waist or chest. Some models also have built in shock absorption in the strap, actually cushioning the fall. Several models are now on the market that are lightweight, easy to use and inexpensive.

Blinds

Some hunters are not comfortable in a treestand and prefer to hunt from the ground. Advanish makes a camo hunting blind similar to an umbrella that folds into a convenient package weighing less than nine ounces, yet opens to provide 43 inches of leafy see through fabric on a frame. The frame can be used as a ground blind or can be attached to the stabilizer hole on a bow. When attached to the bow the blind completely hides the shooter from the front.

Cover System offers what it calls "Dimensional Concealment." It's comprised of a system of bendable 3-D branches complete with leaves contained within a mounting block. While the block can be mounted to a tree to provide cover in a treestand, a ground spike attachment is available, allowing the camo system to be used as a ground blind. Once mounted, the branches can be bent to provide the maximum coverage. The system is surprisingly lifelike, light and folds into a portable package. I've used this system in the field and was amazed at its effectiveness.

Never before has the bowhunter had such a variety of high quality equipment to choose from. In fact, one of the problems is that there are too many items from which to choose. In my bowhunting experience I've found that keeping my gear as simple as possible ensures fewer problems. While there are a lot of new gadgets on the market, some of them are just that, gadgets. Some careful shopping and product comparison should enable every bowhunter to find the right gear to fit his or her needs and stay within a budget. □

COVER PAINTING BY GERALD PUTT

THE MALLARD is the most abundant and widely distributed duck in North America, and the sight of that iridescent head, white neck ring, chestnut breast and orange legs of a fat, cornfed, greenhead, "locked-up" and dropping fast into the decoys on a gray winter morning gets the hearts of many a camo-clad hunter a thumpin'. The hen mallard is the most vocal of all the commonly hunted species of ducks, and for that reason, most commercial duck calls imitate her.

The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

Ol' "Betsy" did the job during the season. Now, before you lock it up in the cabinet, it needs some tender loving care. Here are some tips on . . .

Gun Care

THE MODEL 12 Winchester had a long history with the older hunter. He couldn't recall the exact year he received the 16-gauge pump as a birthday gift, but it was sometime in the early '30s. It had been his only turkey gun for 30 years, until a sleek 12-gauge autoloader replaced it in the 1960s.

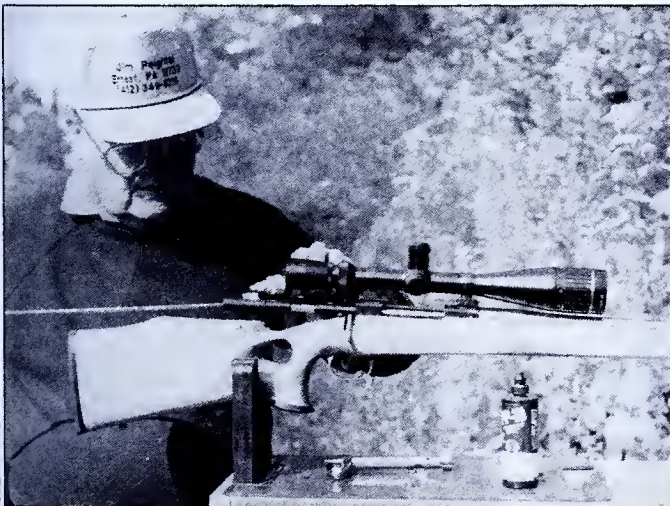
One recent day, the Model 12 caught his eye when he reached for the autoloader in his basement gun safe, and he couldn't resist the temptation to hunt again with his old favorite. He replaced the 12-gauge shells in his vest with high brass number 5 shot 16-gauge ammo, and then gave the old 16 a quick wipe with an oily rag and headed for his truck. A half hour later he was in the turkey woods. He carefully

picked a spot behind two large beech trees that partly concealed him, but also allowed him to see over the edge of a ridge. Camo gloves on and mask in place, he made his first call and immediately got a response. Suddenly, a young jake appeared 20 yards away, and when it disappeared behind a large beech tree, he raised the old pump and pulled the trigger when the bird came into view.

Instead of the anticipated crack of the shot, however, there was only a dull thud, which alerted the turkey. He quickly worked the slide and pulled the trigger, but again nothing happened. A third time he worked the slide and pulled the trigger, tumbling the running bird. He couldn't imagine what was wrong with the Model

12, but later, in his basement workshop he disassembled it and was amazed that the entire mechanism was covered with what he called "brown moss."

He realized then that the old pump was simply the vic-



DON LEWIS using a Stoney Point bore guide. Bore guides (some call them rod guides) hold the rod in alignment with the bore. It helps prevent buckling, which pushes the rod against the sides of the bore.



VENCO INDUSTRIES, INC. offers a wide variety of cleaning solvents. Unlike harsh engine or some type of grease removers, Shooter's Choice bore solvent does not attack bore metal. These solvents soften fouling, making it possible to brush out.

tim of neglect, that it had been at least 10 years since he had cleaned the shotgun internally. After a thorough cleaning with a degreaser, he dried the entire assembly and applied a light coating of gun oil with a small paintbrush. The gun worked flawlessly after that. Although he had gotten his turkey, it embarrassed him to think that he had been so careless not to examine and test all of his guns, and he assured me that every gun in his safe has since been properly cleaned.

The old hunter may have thought he was the only one who neglected cleaning his firearms, but I can assure you he has lots of company. In my gunsmith days someone dropped off a .30-06 built on a 98 Mauser action when I wasn't home. A note hanging from the trigger guard said, "Gun won't fire." I took the bolt apart and found it was rusted beyond belief. It took an hour to get everything in order, and as a precautionary step I replaced the firing pin spring. I learned later that the bolt had been soaked in carburetor fluid and then dunked in hot soapy water, apparently to wash the fluid off. It didn't work. Between the carburetor fluid and the water, the bolt's innards were not only covered with rust, but also showed signs of pitting.

These might be extreme cases, but the "uncleaned" gun has cost more than one hunter a shot. Don't ever assume that a gun that hasn't been out of closet, gun cabinet or safe will still be in workable condition, even though it performed perfectly a year before. Certain atmospheric conditions can play havoc with a firearm. Also, there's a false belief that stashing one away that has been "well oiled" will be ready to go on opening day. Too much oil is worse than too little, because too much gathers dirt.

Oil really has two purposes: it's a lubricant and a cooling agent. The cooling aspect of oil applies more to engine and gearboxes than to firearms. Oil in a firearm is a rust preventive and, to some degree, a lubricant. For the most part, though, a firearm will operate without any type of lubricant.

I'm not implying that some lubricant shouldn't be used, but many people tend to be too generous with oil. For years I used an oil-soaked shaving brush to lubricate as many parts as possible. I seldom added oil to the brush, but it finally succumbed to years of use, and when I finally had to discard it, I felt like I was turning my back on an old friend.

I believe the bore of a firearm is the easiest to clean. Today, we have a variety of safe, abrasive-free bore cleaners such as Shooter's Choice. Using any of these liquid bore cleaners properly will guarantee a fouling-free bore. Maybe we should look at what constitutes a fouled bore.

When a jacketed bullet passes through a bore, it leaves an almost invisible smear of jacket material. At the same time, powder residue and smoke are still in the bore, and the next bullet "irons" more jacket material, powder residue and smoke on top of the first fouling. Subsequent bullets add more fouling, and the bore literally begins to shrink in diameter. Admittedly, this can't be seen with the unaided eye, but a

bore scope will quickly point out areas that are badly fouled.

During the build up of fouling layers high spots form. I'm not exactly sure why this happens, but high spots cause major problems for bullets passing over them. It's possible that when a bullet strikes a high spot, some of its jacket material may be ripped off or the bullet slightly deformed. When this happens, the bullet loses its balance potential. In other words, the bullet begins to whip or even start to cone after leaving the muzzle. The coning is technically called gyroscopic precession. This means the bullet's nose is going in right angles to its axis. Usually a bad crown is responsible for coning.

To make coning a little easier to visualize, think of a quarterback throwing a football. When he throws a perfect long pass the ball is spinning rather rapidly and its nose follows the tangent, or line of flight, to the highest arc and right down to the receiver's hands. The ball's point or nose doesn't wobble. When a poor pass is thrown, the ball wobbles and its nose cones up and down and right and left. For the most part, the pass doesn't travel far, and as far as shooting is concerned, bullets that cone excessively will shoot low.

Many hunters and even some competitive shooters shy away from using a brass brush. The late Clyde Hart, who was considered one of the world's great barrel makers, told me that those who think a brass brush (properly bristled and used) is hard on a bore should consider the impact a speeding bullet has on a bore. Notice I pointed out properly bristled and used. Here's what that means. Many brass brushes have a wrapped iron-wire system to hold the bristles. As the bristles become shorter through wear, there is a danger the iron wire core will scrape against the bore, and Mr. Hart thought that that was much more detrimental than the brass bristles. A brass brush should be somewhat difficult to push through a bore. That's why I think the barreled action should be firmly

held in a vise and bore guides should be used for bolt action rifles. Bore guides (some call them rod guides) hold the rod in alignment with the bore. It helps prevent buckling, which pushes the rod against the sides of the bore. This brings up an important point about cleaning rod material.

For years, jointed cleaning rods were made from aluminum or brass. Aluminum and brass are both soft metals, and when a rod scrapes against the bore, the edges of the lands scrape metal off the rod and these scrapings can damage the bore or become part of the layers of fouling. That might be a bit far-fetched, but it's not beyond reason.

In my opinion a one-piece steel cleaning rod is best. There are no joints to scrape against the bore, and a steel rod is not as susceptible to buckling. Steel is as hard (maybe more so) than bore steel, so there is little danger of bits of rod metal being left in the bore.

There is no danger in brushing a bore vigorously with a brass brush. There is no set amount of strokes, but after a bore has been soaked with a bore solution and brushed a dozen times with a brass brush, running several patches through the bore will show immediately if the bore is clean. As long as a greenish or bluish tint is visible on a clean patch there is still copper fouling in the bore. Simply repeat the process until the patches are clean. Best results will come from following the bore solution's directions.

Gun cleaning is time consuming but necessary. Usually one good cleaning a year is sufficient. Before placing the firearm in storage make certain all fingerprints are wiped off, and by all means do not stuff rags, patches or any other device in the bore. Store all guns where the temperature remains relatively constant, and beware of some lined cases, because not all of them are moisture proof. When it's time to head afield, a properly cleaned gun can be a hunter's best friend. □

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

Turkeys have been reintroduced to Everglades National Park after nearly half a century of absence. Sixteen Osceola (Florida) subspecies wild turkeys were trapped on private land just west of Lake Okeechobee and released on Long Pine Key in January.

Hunters in Maryland set a new harvest record during the 2000 spring turkey season, taking 2,705 birds — up two percent from the 2,651 taken in 1999. Garrett County was tops, with 533 birds.

In 1973, when the National Wild Turkey Federation was founded, there were an estimated 1.3 million wild turkeys and 1.5 million turkey hunters. Thanks to the work of state wildlife agencies and the NWTf's many volunteers and partners, today there are an estimated 5.4 million turkeys and 2.6 million turkey hunters. Since 1985, more than \$120 million NWTf and cooperator funds have been spent on more than 15,000 projects benefiting wild turkeys throughout North America.

A record 20,276 turkeys were taken by hunters in Ohio during the 3-week spring season in 2000. Jakes comprised 54 percent of the harvest. Ashtabula County was tops, with 1,135 birds. More than 200,000 turkeys inhabit nearly all of Ohio.

Hunters in West Virginia took 12,684 turkeys during the 2000 spring season — 13 percent higher than the previous spring's 11,241 birds. Harrison County was tops, with 513 taken.

Hunters in Missouri took a whopping 65,841 turkeys during the 2000 spring season. Top counties were Franklin, 1,236; Macon, 1,100; and Texas, 1,086. Although the previous year's nest success was above average, only about one in five toms harvested were jakes. This bodes well for this spring's season, as a plentiful supply of 2-year-old birds await hunters. Only four hunting incidents marred the 3-week season last spring, and all the injuries were minor. Since 1985, Missouri has averaged nearly 14 spring turkey hunting incidents per year.

Hunters in Massachusetts took 2,147 turkeys during the spring 2000 season. The harvest is the second highest on record, surpassed only by the 2,363 taken in 1999. Twenty-one percent of the 2000 harvest was taken on opening day of the 4-week season. The harvest included 1,135 adult gobblers, 996 jakes and 16 bearded hens. Ten turkeys were killed by archers.

Hunters in Wisconsin took a record 38,262 turkeys during the 2000 spring season. The harvest included 28,236 adult toms, 9,283 jakes and 364 bearded hens.

Hunters in New Hampshire took a record 1,832 turkeys last spring — up 33 percent from the 1,378 taken in 1999. There are now approximately 15,000 turkeys in the state.

Answer: "TIGER OF THE AIR."

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COVER PAINTING BY MARK ANDERSON
(Cover story on p. 11)

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PAGOVENIMEN

15 Years & Counting

IN 1986, with waterfowl populations at record lows, the United States and Canada adopted the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an ambitious agreement to restore waterfowl populations to what they were in the 1970s, considered to be banner years for waterfowl. Right from the start it was recognized that simply cutting back on seasons and bag limits was not enough. Given that more than half of North America's wetlands had been destroyed since settlement days, habitat management became the Plan's cornerstone.

In 1986, the goal was to protect and restore some 6 million acres of wetland habitats. In 1994 — when Mexico became a partner — this was increased to nearly 26 million acres, and in 1998, to 27.4 million.

Key to the success of the Plan is that it integrates all levels of government with businesses, conservation organizations and individuals. Also, all work is done under broad, umbrella-like projects called, "Joint Ventures." So far, 14 Joint Ventures have been established, 11 in the United States, 3 in Canada. This Joint Venture structure ensures that the wide variety of projects — spanning international borders — are coordinated and conducted in the most efficient manner possible.

Another reason for the Plan's success is that, by design, it's updated at regular intervals, in response to changing needs and evolving social and economic factors. The latest Plan objectives, for example, are designed to complement endangered species and nongame programs.

Land acquisition, conservation easements, and leases; protection, restoration and enhancement of wetlands and associated upland habitats; seasonal flooding of active crop lands; and construction of nesting islands and structures for waterfowl and songbirds are all being done under the Plan.

These activities are going on throughout North America, from coastal salt marshes and the Mississippi River Delta bottomlands to the mid-continental prairie pothole region. In Pennsylvania — under the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture — the acquisition of Tamarack Swamp, in the Northwest Region, and the Schuylkill River Greenway, near Valley Forge, are two Plan projects conducted here.

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Plan, and much has been accomplished. Through the many partnerships, more than five million acres have been created or protected, projects have been expanded to include other wetland and natural resource issues and, more to the point, waterfowl numbers have rebounded to near 1970 levels. Much of this increase, however, can be attributed to the ideal weather conditions we have enjoyed over the past few years. To think that waterfowl will remain so abundant under average weather conditions is not realistic. A growing human population and the associated demands to convert wetlands to agriculture mean the Plan's conservation efforts need to be maintained.

The next Plan update is scheduled for 2003, and while the status of waterfowl is much better than it was 15 years ago, the demands to develop and exploit the wetland habitats these and other wild animals depend on are only going to escalate, making the Plan as important as ever. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

Regarding Ben Moyer's "Hunting is Relevant, Right and Moral," in the February issue, I am an avid hunter and believe his definition of hunting does a great justice to past, present and future hunters. I'm not the greatest fan of the PGC, but do thank them for policing our ranks. Would like to see more of this. Being hunters, we need all the help we can get.

J.A. WERKIN JR.
LINESVILLE

Editor:

Truly enjoyed Commissioner Palone's "The Future is in Our Hands." As Mrs. Palone stated, alongside serving our country, we must serve our sporting heritage as well. When I asked my 70-year-old father what he has done for the future of hunting, I was not surprised at his answer.

A life member of the NRA, he recently gave me a life membership as a 40th birthday present. He's a member of his local sportsmen's club, a certified NRA instructor, and an HTE instructor. He has encouraged people of all ages, diversities, faiths and ethnic persuasions to consider the outdoors as a place to enjoy and "leave better than you found it." And he serves as a leader with the Boy Scouts of America in Philadelphia.

R.A. HUML
DURHAM, NC

Editor:

I noticed the February Field Note about the boy and his father who saw three

bobcats on three consecutive days. I think there are quite a few bobcats in Somerset, and I'm glad I'm not the only one who enjoys seeing these beautiful animals in the wild.

G. THIMONS
WARREN

Editor:

My husband and I are not hunters but we really enjoy *Game News*. In the January issue there were a number of interesting pieces on the harvesting of various game animals, and on the eagles and peregrine falcons, too.

In the summertime, our grandchildren come (one at a time), and they all love to go for drives with us to look for wild animals.

B. R. LANDIS
MT. PLEASANT MILLS

Editor;

A few months ago you had an article about peregrine falcons, but it contained two errors: One, the eastern peregrine was nearly extinct before DDT was used and, two, it implied that DDT was harmful to birds.

L. ANDERSON
DENVER

The harmful relationship between DDT and raptors has been well established but, regardless, the environment and society's perception of birds of prey have both improved to the point where natural resource managers can and should do

what can be done to bring back and protect these magnificent birds.

Editor:

Over the years I've read many stories written by sons about their fathers, but all too often it's after the father has passed away.

I just want to say "Thanks" to Dad for all the patience and knowledge you've passed on to me about hunting, and for all the happy lifetime memories I now have.

This past deer season my son got his first deer, and I got the biggest buck of my life, from the same rock and the same time.

R. HENDRICKSON
AMBRIDGE

Editor:

I enjoyed Bill Bower's Field Note about the turkey that had been trapped in Tioga County and transferred to Northumberland, and then was taken by a hunter 14 years later.

I joined the PA Chapter of the NWTF after attending a couple organizational meetings at Penn State. The chapter had only several hundred members, and no local chapters, and biologists Jerry Wunz and Arnie Hayden represented the Game Commission. It's safe to say that they were the glue that held us together.

J.P. CROUSE
WESTMORELAND

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

Wedding Day

Gobbler



AS SOON as I got my 1999-2000 hunting license, I checked the digest for the spring turkey opening date and noticed it was April 29, the same date it opened in 1995.

That date has stuck in my mind because it was in early April of that year when my mother told me that my cousin Lisa and her fiancé, Mike, had set their wedding date. I went into a mild state of shock and got a sinking feeling in my stomach because I just knew what date it was going to be before I heard it. My fears were realized when my mother announced April 29. "We'll get the full details in the mail in a couple of weeks," Mom said happily.

I kept saying, "April 29? You're sure? April 29?"

Mom looked at me kind of funny and said, "Yes, the 29th of April. Why?"

"Mom, April 29 is the first day of turkey season," I said. "Turkeys. You remember. That's why I've been up to camp scouting a couple of times in the past two weeks."

My mom, the diplomat she is, just gave me that wide-eyed look mothers are known for and said, "Oh."

"Well, Lisa better know how much I love her to give up the first day of spring gobbler season," I said.

Despite the pending wedding, I continued to scout areas for turkeys and get camp ready for the upcoming season. Missing the first day, I figured, meant I needed to locate more gobblers, so I checked areas farther back off the beaten path. I reasoned this would increase my chances, because I couldn't get off work again until after the first week.

I knew the wedding would be in Maryland, and when the invitation arrived in the mail, I learned it would be an outdoor ceremony in Westminster at 2:30. I read it over again. For some reason I had gotten the impression the wedding would be in the morning. I called Mom and told her I would still be able to hunt. I could tell she was trying to be patient with me, knowing how I am about hunting, but she wanted

to know how I could possibly do both.

"After work on the 28th I'll load up my gear and head to camp," I explained, "and because Westminster is only three hours away, you and Donna (my sister) can pick me up at 8 o'clock. That will give me a couple hours to hunt, and we'll still be in Maryland in plenty of time."

"Are you sure?" Mom said.

"I'm sure." I replied.

"Okay," she said, "We'll be there at 8 o'clock."

"I'll be there."

"You better be," Mom warned.

Friday the 28th finally came and after work I loaded up the truck and got my final reminder from Mom that I'd better be ready

when they

got there.

At camp I

unloaded

the truck, made

a small fire in the woodburner

and put the food away. Next I separated my hunting clothes and equipment from my wedding and travel clothes, then got my daypack ready so that all I needed to do in the morning was put a drink and some food in it.

The next morning I finished loading up the daypack, checked my jacket pockets for shells, gloves, headnet and flashlight, and made sure I had my bag of calls. I made double sure my license was secure on the back of my jacket, grabbed my shotgun and drove the half hour to an area where I had found plenty of droppings, tracks and feathers, and heard several gobblers while scouting.

I parked the truck, grabbed my stuff and headed into the woods. I placed my decoys about 18 yards from where I intended to set up, wrapped an orange band around a tree several yards behind my calling location, and then sat down with my back against a wide

By Kathi Ponzetti

tree. I got settled in and put my headnet on, loaded the shotgun and reached in my pocket for my bag of calls. To my horror I couldn't find them. I checked the ground around me, but to no avail. It was getting light, so there was no time to retrace my steps from the truck.

After getting over being upset at myself for so carelessly not having my calls, I thought about how I was lucky just to be in the woods. Reminding myself of this settled me down, and I remembered an experiment I had intended to try this year. I had been practicing yelping with my natural voice, and I was confident I could call in a gobbler that way.

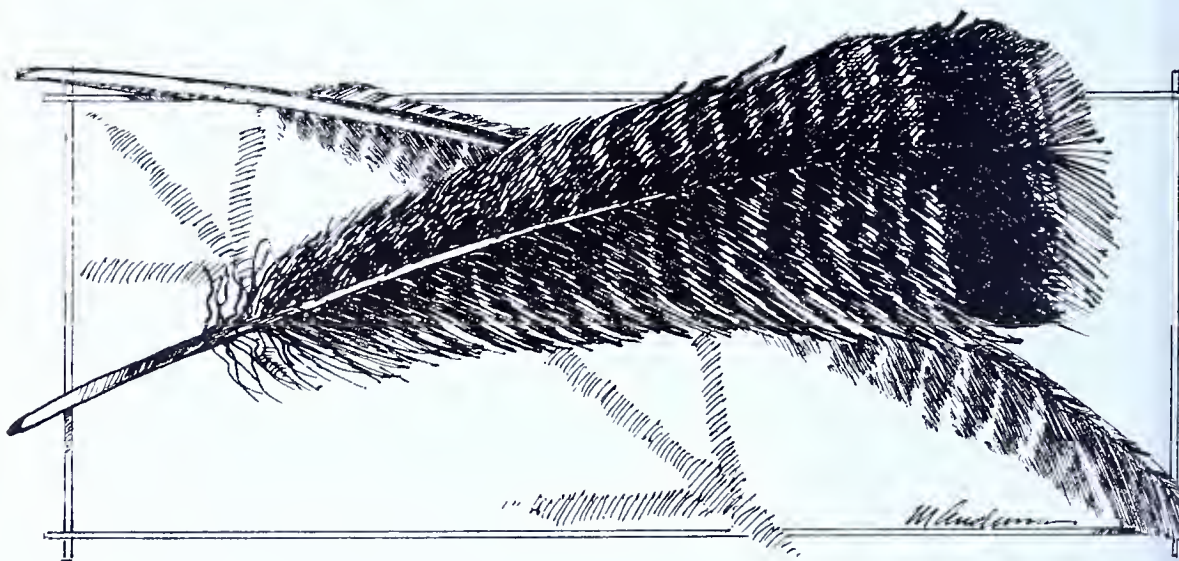
Just after daylight a gobbler sounded off. He was directly in front of me, and within 100 yards. The bench I was on dropped off sharply 35 yards in front of me to a lower bench that is thick with greenbriers and grapevines. The gobbler sounded off again and a second tom gobbled to my left. The excitement of being close to even one gobbler, let alone two, had made my day, no matter how badly I might mess up trying to call in a bird with my natural voice.

The birds gobbled back and forth a

couple of times before I took a deep breath and started to call, soft at first and then louder and quicker at the end. I got an immediate answer from both toms. I did not respond immediately, however, thinking it best to call sparingly. The gobblers were now on the move and each time they gobbled they were a little closer. I brought up the shotgun and pointed it slightly to the left of the decoys, midway between the two gobbling birds.

I called once every third gobble, thoroughly enjoying all the drama. The thrill of hearing the birds, the anxiety of trying something new, wondering if the gobblers would catch on and vanish, or if I would be spotted with those eagle-like eyes all raced through my mind. A gobble to my left was very close. In fact, I thought I heard a double gobble. I quit calling and slowly inched around to the left, but a blowdown 10 yards out partly blocked my vision to my far left. I sat there motionless and ready, straining my eyes and ears for any kind of sound or movement.

A turkey walked out from behind the blowdown, and I could easily see its red head, but the beard was only three or four inches long. The jake stopped and looked over toward the decoys. He proudly stood there for a moment, looking as if to say, "Here I am, ladies."



I knew I could probably take him, but I have a self-imposed 20-yard rule when I hunt turkeys: If the bird is more than 20 yards away, I don't shoot. Some may say that's silly, but I use my rule to be sure of my target.

I watched the jake start to walk toward the decoys, but he was going in a slight loop, keeping just outside 20 yards. I was pretty sure I heard more than one turkey from that direction, and I was right, as a second turkey walked out

from behind the blowdown. It had its neck stretched way up as it walked out, which made some of the feathers on the upper part of the neck stick straight out. The red head and short beard identified it as another jake. Right behind it a third bird emerged, and this one was a mature gobbler in

full strut, sporting a long beard. His head was mostly white with a little red and blue showing, and in the early morning light there was not enough sunlight for the iridescent feathers to give the tom that majestic bronze appearance. Instead, he appeared black.

The tom paraded out in front of me, displaying for the decoys. He strutted just outside of 20 yards and worked his way toward the decoys, moving down and then along the edge of the bench. I slowly moved the shotgun as he moved, keeping the bead on his head, but I had to wait until he came out of his strut and got a little closer. The seconds seemed like hours as I watched the tom strut and listened to him drum. He was still to the left of the decoys when he stopped and went into a half strut, moving his head up and forward from his body. I pushed off the safety and the report of my Winchester 1300 echoed through the mountains. I saw the gobbler fall backward and disappear over the side of the ridge. I

scrambled to my feet to get the bird, and found him lying on a small rock outcropping about 10 yards down from the ridgetop. Carefully working my way down over the edge, holding onto saplings to stop myself as I made my way, I got about 10 feet from the gobbler and ran out of trees to hang onto. I laid my shotgun down and slid several feet past the bird.

When I turned back toward him I

was shocked to see he was up on his feet. His head and neck were bloody and he was wobbling, and I was too far from my shotgun, so I leaped and grabbed the gobbler by his legs, one in each of my outstretched hands. "You're not getting away; you're dead and don't know it yet," I

shouted.

On impact with the ground I started sliding down the mountainside feet first, with the gobbler in tow. The tom was beating his wings off of me as we slid, and I had my head down with my face tucked between my outstretched arms for protection. I couldn't see, so I just hung on tight until, with a thud, I hit a tree and stopped.

The gobbler was no longer beating his wings, but when I looked up I got whacked in the face with his wings. Finally the turkey lay still, so I let go of its legs and pushed myself up onto my knees and sat back. I wiped the dirt and leaves from my face and from under my jacket. After giving thanks for my turkey, I looked it over.

Aside from one broken tail feather and a missing tip on another, he was in good shape. While tagging the bird I got a panicky feeling about what time



it was. I checked my watch and was relieved it was only 6:10. Only a half hour had passed from when I heard the first gobble, although it seemed like it had taken hours for events to unfold. Thinking about a 60-yard hike to get back up the mountain, it hit me how comical the past few minutes had been and I laughed so hard my sides hurt.

After reaching the top I packed up my decoys and hurried back to the truck, scanning the ground for my calls as I went. I found the calls right beside the truck, where they had fallen as I gathered my gear. Checking my watch again I realized I had no time to waste. I got back to camp and put my hunting equipment in the cabin. I hung my gobbler from the game pole, and while getting cleaned up I realized I had gotten spurred in the palm of my left hand. I had just gotten up-

stairs to get my suitcase when I heard Mom and Donna pull in. I heard Mom call my name as she opened the door, but before I could answer I heard Donna say, "Mom, look, Kathi got one."

When I came downstairs Mom and Donna were looking at my turkey. "That's a really nice turkey," Mom said.

"Wait until I tell you the story. I'll tell you on the way," I said. Donna and I carefully packaged the turkey and placed it in the refrigerator until I could return the next day. On the trip to Maryland I told them my adventure. We laughed and laughed.

We made it to Westminster as planned and the wedding was beautiful.

My bird wasn't the heaviest gobbler, at 20 pounds, nor had the longest beard at 9½ inches, but, undoubtedly, it's the most memorable turkey I've ever taken, and April 29 is a date I'm not likely to forget for a long time. □

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Details Count

By Ken Bowman

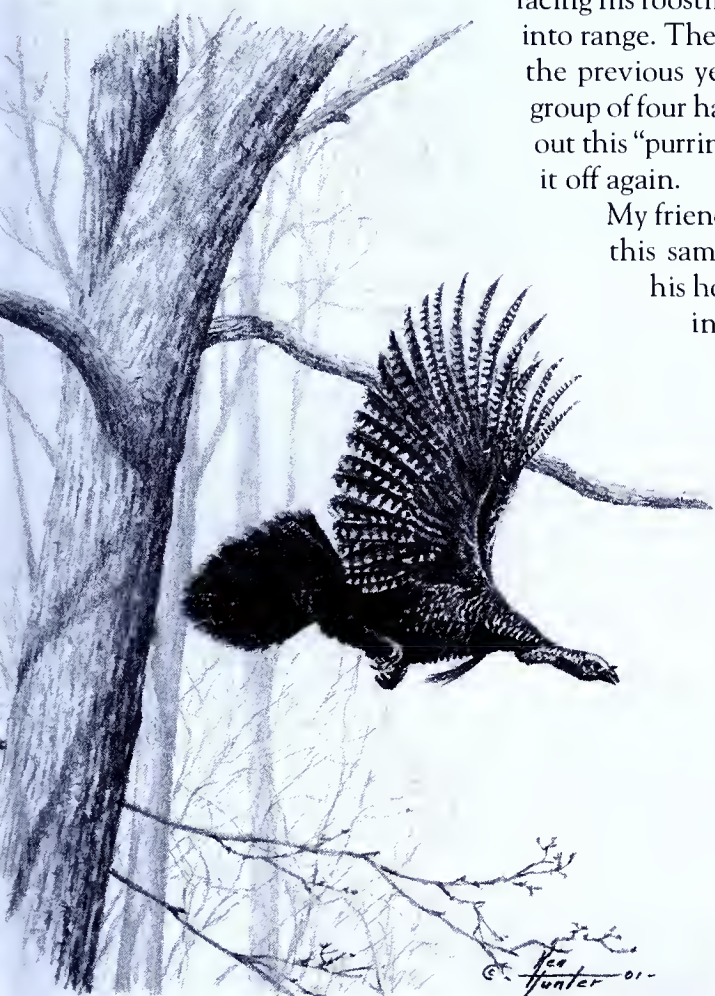
THE GOBBLER sounded off at 5:40 that Thursday morning, and once he got started he wouldn't quit. I checked my watch to measure the intervals: 5 seconds, 5 seconds, 20 seconds, 40 seconds, 4 seconds, then a double gobble. He continued like this until 6:05, when he flew down about 40 yards to my right, across the shallow saddle along the ridge. That was my only glimpse of the bird. With the season still two days away, all I wanted to do was listen.

I'd hunted this area for the last few years and knew that the birds would roost in the same little pocket just off the ridgeline, on its steep eastern face. The morning before it had been colder and I didn't hear a peep, but this morning this bird, anyway, was vocal. I listened as he made a beeline through the open woods, heading for some hay fields about a quarter mile away. He covered this distance in less than 10 minutes, sounding off about every 50 yards or so. My plan was now set. I'd have my

back against a big oak along his travel route, facing his roosting area, hoping to call him into range. The same strategy had worked the previous year. The last jake out of a group of four had left his buddies to check out this "purring lady." Maybe I could pull it off again.

My friend, Fred, lives at the base of this same ridge, and I stopped by his house after work the following night to make sure I

wouldn't be interfering with his plans. He would be hunting below his pond, about 200 yards or so from the ridge. He was hoping for a reenactment of last year's hunt, too. His soft calls at first light had coaxed a longbeard from a roost on the ridge almost into his lap. This spring he had been seeing two longbeards and a jake in the area. He would hunt them low and I would hunt high, it turned out, and with



the ridgeline between us, we'd be out of each other's way.

Too many things can go wrong on a turkey hunt. Breaking sticks or briars ripping across pant legs in the calm morning darkness can spoil a hunt before it starts, especially when it comes to setting up close to a roosting site. I've learned many lessons the hard way. Birds have flown away from me in total darkness as I crunched through dry leaves. At first light I've been under birds that flew out of sight instead of dropping softly to the ground in front of me. Friends have told me about birds that never tree called, never gobbled. They stayed on the roost until way after 10, then busted out of the county when the hunter moved.

The general area where I hunt is loaded with turkeys, and for that reason there are a lot of hunters, too. Even so, hunters bumping hunters is not the problem it was only a few years ago. Now, the birds are so numerous and widely distributed that most mornings there is no interference between hunters.

On opening day I reached the ridge at 5:05, and the 40-degree morning was calm with just a "fingernail" of moon low in the southeast. I thought I heard a bird flying down in the distance, and I hoped I hadn't bumped it. Perhaps it had just turned on its branch, I thought. I made a mental note to slow down, cautiously shifting my weight from one foot to the other. It seemed to take forever to go the 200 yards to reach the big red oak I had picked out on Thursday. After hanging my orange vest over a broken snag above my left shoulder, I dug out all

the gear from my pockets, turned my hat to the camo side and settled down for the wait. My anticipation was high, and I wondered if the hunt would go the way I'd played it out in my mind.

Just as I settled in, however, I discovered I was not alone; a hunter behind me sounded off with a locator call. A thunderous gobble answered him, and that got everything going as no fewer than five birds sounded off all around me. The toms kept sounding off for the next 20 minutes, answering and challenging each other and calling for the hens, but I never heard any hen talk.

Then, just as shooting time arrived, the gobblers stopped.

I yelped ever so softly with my diaphragm call, and immediately got things stirred up again. At that point I quit calling and just listened until the sky lightened and I could make out the green of the mayapple tops. I yelped again, and this time a loud gobble startled me; the

bird had to be within 50 yards. I jerked the 10-gauge to my shoulder, and my adrenaline level was so high I had to remind myself to keep my head down on the stock, as I didn't want to shoot over the bird — as I've done in the past.

I could hear the bird drumming and knew he was in full strut just out of sight. I was shaking like a leaf and felt sure the tom could hear my heart pounding. My eyes strained to see movement as they followed the soft crunching of his steps. He gobbled again and then I saw him. His beak was wide open as he gobbled, and his bluish-white head pitched forward like he was throwing those gobbles right at me. He moved within range and his 4-inch snood tossed wildly as he pitched his head forward. I put the shotgun bead at the base of his neck and pulled the trigger. The bird

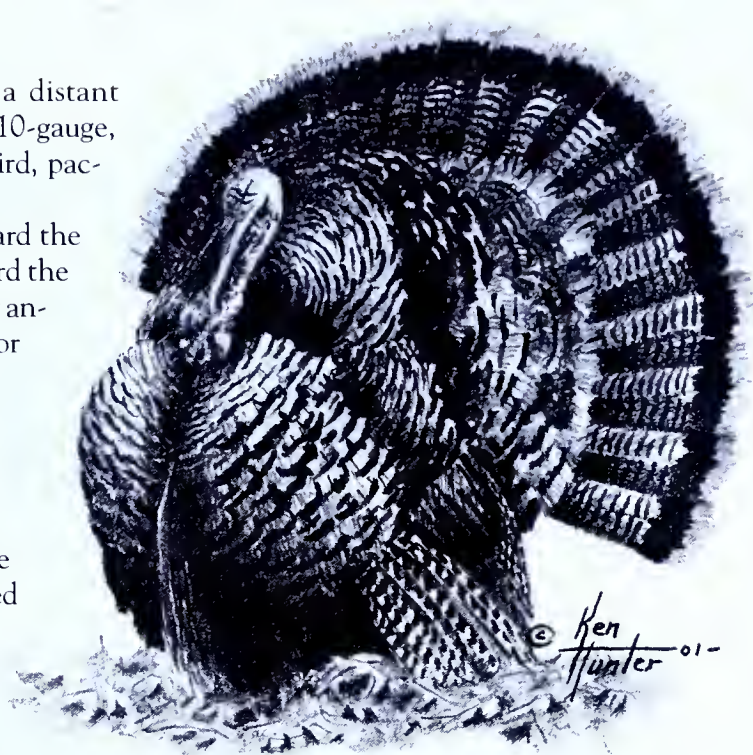


dropped and lay still. I heard a distant gobble, probably answering my 10-gauge, and then I walked over to my bird, pacing off 22 steps.

While filling out my tag I heard the raucous cutting of a hen off toward the hay fields. A gobbler immediately answered her, and after a minute or two I heard two quick shots then excited yelling. It was amazing: two gobblers killed less than five minutes apart and within 300 yards of each other.

My wife, Jo Ellen, had to leave for work by 7 o'clock, so I wanted to get home in time to show her the gobbler. Donning my orange vest, I left the site and nearly bounced the half mile back to my truck. Jo Ellen said it was a nice bird, but not so big that I should get it mounted. She was right, as our living room already contained two beautiful 21-pound gobblers. We took pictures and then I got a tape to measure the bird. The rounded spurs measured nearly an inch, and most of the beard was nine inches, but there were longer strands. Among them were two more than 12 inches long. The bird weighed 18½ pounds.

From this hunt, and from others, I've learned that soft tree calls are sometimes all it takes. I was lucky enough to have set up right in an area where the gobbler expected hens to be. He'd heard my soft calls and strutted right in. With me keeping quiet while he was so close, he didn't know exactly where I was, so he came looking. I chose a setup where the terrain kept the



gobbler hidden until he was in range. If a gobbler can see through the woods for a long way, he's bound to pick out a hunter.

I had also learned that a shot 300 or so yards away doesn't really bother the gobblers. The other hunter closer to the hay fields was able to get a fresh fix on his bird when it shock gobbled at my shot, then he called him in with aggressive yelps.

My approach was early enough and quiet enough so that I didn't disturb the birds on my way in. I'll have to remind myself of how important all of these things are when I come back to this spot next spring. Maybe I'll have another tale about how paying attention to the details paid off. □

COVER PAINTING BY MARK ANDERSON

THIS IS the moment you've been dreaming about all winter — the long awaited spring gobbler season. You've located this tom's strutting zone from scouting trips, and now it's just a matter of drawing him in that few extra yards and hoping some mouthy hen doesn't pull him away. Spring gobbler hunting in Pennsylvania is better than ever, with hunters taking approximately 36,300 birds last spring and a record 37,806 in 1999. Maybe your tag is destined for a boss gobbler this spring.

How do you find out what happens to birds on a 3,000-mile journey? Attach satellite transmitters to some and follow their progress!



To the Arctic Circle and Back

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

SINCE 1983 they've come, drawing birders from hundreds of miles away, as well as passers-by who just want a closer look at the huge white birds. Dwarfing the thousands of geese that take over the area during the winter, the tundra swan has become a welcomed visitor to the Game Commission's Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area.

For some people, though, in Pennsylvania and other Atlantic Flyway states where the swans winter, they can become a problem. Too many swans in farmers' fields can reduce winter wheat yields, although swans mostly feed on waste grain and are not considered a significant problem. A new study will allow researchers to determine what habitat best suits the birds while they're in Pennsylvania, and make that environment more attrac-

tive to them. By properly managing swans' wintering habitat, we can better address the problems they cause and, at the same time, better manage them.

In recent years, North Carolina and Virginia have both established limited seasons for tundra swans, and there's a chance that in future years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may allow limited swan hunting in other Atlantic Flyway states, including Pennsylvania.

Tundra swans are divided into two groups — the eastern and western populations. While the western population winters in the Pacific Flyway, the eastern population (about 90,000 birds) spends the winter in the Atlantic Flyway, from Pennsylvania south to North Carolina. To get here, these birds have made quite a trek — one of the longest migrations known for waterfowl — from their breeding grounds in the arctic regions of Alaska and Canada.

In Pennsylvania, most wintering swans can be found in Lancaster and Lebanon counties, primarily at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area in Lancaster and Lebanon counties. Pennsylvania is on the northern limit of the swans' wintering grounds, with numbers averaging from less than 1,000 to 3,000. This year, in March (during the peak of the migration), more than 14,000 were counted at Middle Creek — where the parking lots and roadsides became jammed with cars bringing curious watchers to see the record number of swans.

Once the swans leave their wintering grounds for their breeding areas, they are nearly impossible to locate. No one knows where or how often they stop during their migrations between these two areas, and it's hard to tell how many of them survive the trip. To find answers to these and other questions, Pennsylvania, together with Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina, are fitting swans with tiny satellite transmitters, as part of a study that will run until September 2003.

Over the past two winters, 175 swans have been captured in Pennsylvania and fitted with leg bands to determine annual survival rates. To capture the birds, bait (ears of corn) is set out in a regular feeding area. Once the swans begin coming to the bait on a daily basis, a net is laid out and camouflaged. Several rockets are driven into the ground and attached to the net. When the swans get on the bait, the rockets are set off, causing the net to sail over and then fall on the birds, trapping them. The swans are quickly removed from the

net and placed in temporary holding pens, where age and sex is determined.

Tundra swans are unbelievably docile; they are held with ease while they undergo a brief examination. The entire process is systematic, and everyone involved has specific duties. Volunteers line up, each holding a swan and waiting his turn to have his swan outfitted with at least one piece of jewelry. Every bird receives a numbered leg band and, depending on sex, a neck collar of some sort.

In early February, we caught 31 swans. Mike Shaw, biologist aide, removed swans from



Wildlife technician JACK GILBERT fits an adult swan with a coded neckband while Bucknell student Matt Roberts waits to have his swan examined.



By measuring the length of the bill, PGC Biologist JOHN DUNN can tell the difference between a trumpeter and a tundra swan, which are sometimes found together.

the holding pen while Ian Gregg, PGC wildlife biologist for the Migratory Game Bird Unit, was designated recorder.

To reduce stress on the swans, Jack Gilbert, PGC wildlife technician, and John Dunn, PGC Migratory Game Bird Unit supervisor, called out statistics from each bird as fast as Ian could write. Age, sex, bill length, leg band number, radio frequency — whatever applied to that bird. The adult females



CAPTURED SWANS ARE kept in temporary pens until examined and fitted with leg bands and neck collars. Then they are carried to the trucks to be released at the lake at Middle Creek. Below, the author holds a juvenile male while the glue dries on a coded neckband before carrying the swan to the trucks.

John Dunn



that received transmitters, as well as all juveniles, had a feather sample taken to be sent to Cornell University. There the feathers are used to differentiate swans from different populations and breeding areas, based on the amounts of different isotopes in the feather tissue.

After processing came the long treks to the trucks. The first time swans were caught in a field, they were released there, and many of them stayed in the field for several days before they returned to Middle Creek to roost on the lake. Biologists realized that the birds are very susceptible to stress from the capture process, and they need water to preen their feathers to be able to fly, so now they are trucked back to Middle Creek to be released at the lake. The trucks, however, couldn't be driven into the farmer's field where the swans were being netted, so they were parked more than a quarter of a mile away. Doesn't sound too far until you have to do it toting an awkward, 20-pound bird.

On that day, 18 adult females were captured. Five satellite transmitters were attached to five of those birds. Eleven received conventional radio transmitters, while the remaining two were fitted with gray coded neckbands. Both of the juvenile females caught re-

ceived radio transmitters, and all nine adult and two juvenile males were given coded neckbands. The radio and satellite transmitters were placed only on females for several reasons: Females are believed to return to the same breeding sites every year, and if they also return to the same wintering sites, then the same birds stand a better chance of being relocated next winter. Also, tracking only females reduces the chance of marking too many members of the same family group, resulting in redundant information.

The satellite collars and the information they provide will enable huge steps to be taken in the management of tundra swans. The breeding range and migration stopovers, as well as movements between the breeding and wintering areas, will be

pinpointed. Average annual survival rates of tundra swans for Pennsylvania and the entire Atlantic Flyway will be able to be estimated. It will be determined if the same populations return to Pennsylvania wintering locations. The movements of the swans on Pennsylvania wintering areas will be determined and related to habitat use. Once critical habitats for the swans are identified, it is hoped they can be managed and protected from future threats, such as development.

The satellite and radio collars serve two very different, but equally important, purposes. With the satellite transmitters, the migration of the swans to and from the breeding and wintering areas can be tracked. The radio collars will allow researchers to track winter movements and monitor survival.

The battery on a satellite collar can last up to 18 months, providing data from three full migrations. The ones that were attached in February will allow for tracking at least through spring and fall 2001 migrations and, we hope, next spring's, too. The radio-collar batteries last about 15 months, so they were used to track the birds in the area the rest of this past winter and should still be operating through all next winter.

The conventional radios are not totally useless the rest of the year, though. The other three states in the study know the frequencies of Pennsylvania birds, and scan for them. Also, several other states that are not capturing swans but do occasionally have them during winter or migration travels, have offered to scan for the birds in their flocks.

Researchers at some migration staging areas such as Long Point, Ontario (on the north shore of Lake Erie), are planning to scan for signals as the swans come through, and Alaska and Canada will probably

check the areas where the satellite birds end up to see if any conventional-transmitter birds can be picked up nearby.

While in Pennsylvania, the radio-collared birds were tracked every week, using ground crews and aircraft to mark locations using a global positioning system. In early March, radio transmitters from swans marked in North Carolina and Maryland were picked up in Pennsylvania, indicating the migration was underway, and reinforcing the importance of Pennsylvania's habitat to migrating swans.



A FEMALE SWAN wearing a satellite transmitter, which weighs about 30 grams. Visitors to the Game Commission's website will be able to follow these birds to and from their arctic breeding grounds.

During the migration, the satellite will provide a daily location of each swan, and once they are on the breeding grounds, one fix a week will be given. This information is being sent to biologists once every two weeks, and will be placed on the PGC website, www.pgc.state.pa.us.

The satellite transmitters are providing information on swan behavior on their remote breeding grounds that otherwise would be nearly impossible to get. The radio collars, on the other hand, allow us to know where the swans are while they're in Pennsylva-

nia. This information is particularly useful when trying to locate a bird suspected to be injured or dead. The radios are relatively inexpensive at \$180 each, so many can be purchased, providing a larger sample size and better survival estimates. The satellite transmitters, however, are \$2,500 each, so fewer are purchased.

Several sportsmen's organizations and conservation groups have given major contributions towards this year's purchase of satellite transmitters. The Northwest Pennsylvania Duck Hunter's Association, Susquehanna River Waterfowler's Association,

Susquehanna River Wetlands Trust, and the Blue Mountain, Susquehannock and Lehigh Valley chapters of Safari Club International donated \$14,500 to move the project forward.

Each year, Pennsylvania hopes to fit swans with 20 radio and five satellite transmitters. Together in 2001, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina will send 185 birds to their breeding grounds with 25 satellite and 160 radio transmitters. The information gained from this study will aid in our understanding of tundra swans and how to better manage them and their habitats in Pennsylvania and other nearby states. □



Representatives from groups who sponsored satellite transmitters gathered February 2 to try and catch some swans. Pictured are (left to right) Bill Wilt, President, Blue Mountain chapter, Safari Club International (SCI); Ken Sangrey, wildlife carver from Manheim, Lancaster County; Ian Gregg, PGC biologist; Rick Shatzer, President, Susquehanna River Waterfowlers Association; Sam Smith, member, Susquehanna River Wetlands Trust; Ken Ellenberger, President, Susquehanna River Wetlands Trust; Bill Paule, member, Blue Mountain chapter, SCI, along with his grandson, Tyler Smith; Craig Kauffman, President, Susquehannock chapter, SCI; Don Meske, Vice-President, Lehigh Valley chapter, SCI; and John Dunn, PGC Migratory Game Bird Unit supervisor.



Discovery is Half the Fun

By Michael J. Bensur

THE GROWTH of the turkey population in the northwest corner is a huge success story. For me, it's given rise to a growing interest in spring gobbler hunting. Conversations with fellow hunters at work who are ardent turkey hunters drew me ever closer to being more than just a passive listener on the subject.

Turkey talk is a foreign language, with purrs, clucks, cackles, cutting, yelps and gobbling all part of the lingo. Learning turkey vocabulary takes time, yet while trying not to be redundant in questioning my hunting coworkers, I began to acquire bits of savvy that veteran turkey hunters might take for granted.

I'm a woodworker by trade and have always enjoyed using my skills in an artistic manner to help break the monotony of years of cabinet making. I enjoy designing and creating pieces of my own, and my interest in turkey hunting offered me a new challenge: take some wood and shape it into something that sounds like a wild turkey. I always have a few pieces of wood I've picked up here and there for small projects like this one, so I sought out my cherry, walnut and mahogany and began. The wood began to take shape after working just a few minutes each day for a couple of weeks. Because of

the detail involved, and the chance of flaws in the wood that sometimes occurs, I made extra parts as I went along, in case I needed to replace a piece that didn't fit just right. Each part was carefully glued together and sanded, and the screws, spring and rubber bands were added to finally produce not just one but three calls, two of which to be used as gifts for relatives who are hard to buy for.

Some scouting the evening before opening day was encouraging, and my anticipation peaked as I drove back home to await the next day. But when the alarm rang the following morning, I had trouble getting up. Don't waste good sleep on a phantom chase, I thought, those turkeys are not out there. But inside was a spark that slowly developed into a small flame that helped break the gravitational pull of my bed. Flicking on the light I

went downstairs and made a beeline for the coffee maker. After a quick bite to eat and a cup of coffee, getting into hunting clothes and boots wasn't such a chore.

Ever since I can remember, a 20-gauge Remington Wingmaster pump has accompanied me on my small game hunts, and while I knew it was a bit small for a turkey hunt, I felt it would do if I didn't try to stretch my shooting range. I grabbed a handful of No 4s and was out the door.

The crisp morning air hit me in the face like a cold cloth. The black sky was dotted with a million glittering stars, causing me to pause outside the house to take it all in. A morning like that has a feeling all its own; it seemed to feed my soul.

I drove the short distance to where I had heard a gobbler just eight hours earlier. The early morning air was filled with the sounds of songbirds, and I approached the edge of a steep bank and started my descent into the valley below, just as I had rehearsed the evening before. Thorns and small tree

branches tugged at my clothing as I quietly slid my way down the hillside.

Reaching the bottom, I cautiously stepped across a small babbling spring that meandered its way through the woods and into a marsh. I stepped onto a cleared path and continued on, searching for just the right spot to set up for my first effort at calling a gobbler. Walking along, the wondrous odor of musty earth, wetland, forest and new growth filled my nostrils. I've always believed that the air is richer with oxygen in places like this, and perhaps that contributed to the exhilaration of the moment. To my left was a stand of dense "horsetails," and to my right a gray mist hovered over the marsh.

I love the sound of spring peepers, because it's a sure sign that winter has finally let go of its icy grip. Here, a chorus of peepers, songbirds and geese heralded in a new dawn. Each was singing its own song, creat-



ing a noisy mix of unorganized music. How, I wondered, with all this racket, was I ever going to hear or call in a turkey.

A grove of hardwood trees was on my left as I walked along, and I carefully stepped over twigs as I made my way to a broad maple tree to sit under. Buds were beginning to open, but not enough to obstruct the view around me as the morning light increased. To my left a fine crop of skunk cabbage was unfurling, reminding me, humorously, how it got its name.

Today I preferred to hunt alone; just me and the turkey, one on one. I put an orange band around the tree, turned my reversible hat over to camouflage, put on a face net and gloves, then imagined myself becoming invisible. I smiled with the boyish thought of vanishing from sight, nothing could see me now and only I knew I was here.

After quietly loading my shotgun, I reached into my pocket and got out my homemade turkey call. I was now prepared to become the Pied Piper of this stretch of woods. If I called, would they come?

Even with my optimism, I was surprised when an enthusiastic gobble immediately followed my first yelps. What do I do now? I thought. A quiet gobble, not far off and up the hill in front of me, then a series of yelps farther up and to the right of that, then another loud gobble on my right had me excited. I sat and listened as more hens started calling.

My tutors' advice suddenly came to mind: Imitate the hens. So, sitting there with my gun at the ready, I carefully mimicked the yelps, clucks and cutting of those hens. I think they were still roosting, because although they were quite vocal, they were not moving any closer. The hour I had allowed myself before having to leave for work seemed like a brief moment. Seven o'clock came all too quickly and I had to leave. Although I didn't tag a turkey, it had been a fun morning.

At work that day, with a measure of experience under my belt, I was finally able

to tell a turkey hunting story of my own. A friend shared my enthusiasm and shed some light on what may have been happening that morning. It seems that when there are hens in the vicinity, a tom will be reluctant to leave a sure thing for a hen he can't see, so he'll strut and display on his own ground and let the female come to him. When the hens go to nest, he'll then search for others, making himself more vulnerable to a hunter's call. Another piece of the puzzle was now gained. With this new knowledge, patience and endurance would become instrumental and increase my chances for success.

The rest of that week was filled with anticipation of my next hunt. A co-worker, Pete, and I talked of our novice approaches to turkey hunting, and thought that our combined efforts might pay off, so we decided to hunt together on the following Saturday. Besides, he was willing to show me some of his hunting spots.

On Saturday morning I was eager to get started and frequently glanced out the window for my companion. Pete pulled into the driveway at the appointed time, and with a hearty greeting we were on our way. I was possessed with an almost giddy sense of elation as we gabbed about our game plan. As we drove into the country, the bright streetlights faded and soon darkness filled the void. The truck's headlights were all that guided us, and Pete began to disclose the details of his last trip to where we were headed. He had quietly stalked into the woods hours before sunrise and happened to sit down under a tree that had a turkey roosted overhead. He had no idea of its presence there until the tree seemingly exploded with cackles and wing beats as the gobbler sailed out of it, scaring him to death. We both laughed about his experience.

Pete is quite a character, passionate and tireless. He's always been an avid hunter, spending countless hours scouting and searching for places to hunt, but, like me, he also was a novice at spring turkey hunting. This day would be a good opportunity for both of us to sharpen our calling skills and learn more about hunting turkeys.

We reached his destination and began a long trek in the darkness, across a huge field and eventually reached the woods where Pete wanted to hunt. Although we saw a lot of turkey tracks in the soft mud, we didn't hear or see any turkeys. After exploring Pete's haunts to no avail, my ego got the best of me, and I said, "Come with me and I'll show you where the turkeys are."

May in northwestern Pennsylvania is my favorite time of year. Cool, sometimes frosty mornings carry the promise of a warm day, and I love the transition. The streams have been flushed out with the spring runoff and have receded to a steady flow. Trout season is open, and I couldn't help but wonder if the trout were rising to dry flies.

It was already mid-morning and I had to shed some clothes. It was wonderful to be outdoors. We had just a couple of hours left until noon when we arrived at Elk Valley. As we walked down the trail along the creek I noticed a few fishermen trying their luck. I debated whether I should trade my shotgun in on my 8-foot Fenwick and join them, but I was intent on showing Pete where we would hear the heart-stopping gobbles of a turkey. We walked past the end of the trail and started into some dense cover when he asked, "Where the heck are you taking me to?" We were on a long road to a secluded woodlot that happened to be just a half mile from his house.

Pointing out where I wanted Pete to set up, I anxiously walked over to

the maple tree as quietly as I could. Looking around, I saw turkey scratchings, which only heightened my hope that this could be the day one of us would bag our first bearded turkey.

A few yelps from the call brought an immediate and enthusiastic response from a gobbler. Pete was closer to it than I, and in his excitement, he went into a rapid series of calls just as a train began to cross a nearby trestle, adding its *clickity-clack* to the mix of sound. I paused, thinking it would be better to wait than to force a situation by unnecessarily adding to the calling. Pete, on the other hand, kept up his rapid yelping, and I thought for sure he would spook the bird. What the heck is he doing? I thought, as if I suddenly knew all there was to know about calling turkeys. The sudden report of a shotgun shattered the silence, abruptly ending my anticipation. In a state of denial and dismay, I half-heartedly continued to watch and cluck on my call, thinking I might still have a chance at taking one of these wily birds.

Pete soon approached with his boastful stride, holding a gobbler. "Atta boy, Pete," I cheered, as a smile crept across my face. It had dawned on me that I was about to share in his enthusiasm and success. All sense of my own disappointment evaporated as he gently laid the bird on the ground and spread its wings for me to see. I reveled in his sweet success. It was a fine young gobbler.

On Monday morning our work place was filled with the buzz of Saturday's successful hunt. Fellow hunters were interested in our story and enjoyed the enthusiasm we shared. Pete and I were no longer novices. We both had a measure of experience under our belts, and we would expand on that knowledge the next season.

In the years that have passed since that first season I've managed to take a spring longbeard and a hen in the fall. It meant spending a lot of time in the woods, but never once did I think it wasn't a most worthwhile pursuit. □

What's known as "The Greatest Generation" has influenced the Game Commission, too. Here's one man's story . . .

Carl Jarrett

By Bill Bower
Bradford County WCO

IN THE PAST few years there has been a move to build a memorial to honor the men and women who served during World War II. The media has been blaring out that we are losing World War II veterans at the rate of 1,000 per day, and we can't let them fade away without being remembered.

Recently, I got to talk to an old soldier, one who just happened to be a Pennsylvania game protector for most of his life. Carl Jarrett spent most of his career in Fulton County, and like all WCOs, he has many stories to tell.

Carl was born in 1922 in Fulton County and was the son of a Methodist minister. The family left the area when he was seven years old, and then moved several more times before Carl graduated from high school in Perry County. After graduation Carl enrolled as a forestry major at a local college, and one day the dean called him into his office and told him that there was no way he was going to pass chemistry. Not wanting to tell his father that he was not passing, Carl (coming from a religious background) decided to pray for a miracle.

Several days later Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, and just like most of the young men at the time, Carl saw a recruiter about joining the Marines. The officer told him that only 50 percent of those who enlisted would survive the war. Carl figured the odds weren't that bad, because if he stayed in school and flunked chemistry, he was 100 percent sure his dad would kill him.



CARL JARRETT graduated in the fourth class from the Ross Leffler School of Conservation in 1947. He spent most of his career in Fulton County.

His unit was shipped overseas, and its first assignment was at Bougainville, where the unit lost 48 percent of its men. The soldiers were then assigned to Guadalcanal, which had already been considered secured, although small pockets of fighting were still going on. The unit stayed there for three months until it was brought back up to full strength. During this operation, Carl fired only four shots: one at an enemy plane, one at a wild pig, one at a crocodile, and one at a vulture. Carl thought that the war wasn't all that bad, but then his luck ran out.

He was in the first wave of Marines that went ashore on Guam. The recruiting officer had been correct. Only

50 percent who went ashore survived. Carl was injured by a hand grenade and spent four days in a hospital.

Upon returning from his 2½-year stint overseas, Carl was stationed at Camp Pendleton in California. He took 30 days leave to get married, and when the newlyweds found out that he was to be sent back overseas, he desperately wanted to make sure his wife was back in Pennsylvania before he was shipped out. This presented a problem because there was a priority as to who could get plane tickets, so he went to see his commanding officer and told him that his wife was pregnant and needed to go home. Carl felt bad about lying, but thought he had had no choice. After his wife returned home she wrote him that he hadn't lied, that she was, indeed, going to have a baby.

Carl said that his sea bag was already aboard ship in San Diego when the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan. Anyone with 130 points was excused from going overseas, and he had more than that. After the war in Germany was over, the military gave points for each year of service and extra points for time spent overseas. The men with the most points were released earliest, so Carl's bag went overseas but he didn't. It took six months for him to get his bag back.

Carl was one of the lucky 50 percent that made it through the war. He still had college to look forward to, and that dreaded chemistry course, but as luck would have it the Game Commission was recruiting men for their fourth class at the Ross Leffler School of Conservation. Thinking he might like to do that type of work, Carl applied. When he went to take the test, however, he almost turned around when he noticed there were more than 300 men there to take the exam. He took the test, though, and weeks later

found out that his name was third on the list, but there were several interviews in Harrisburg to get through.

At the first interview he was asked, "If you had to kill someone, would you be able to do it." Carl, with his sense of humor, answered, "Who do you have in mind?" Because he was the only one who laughed, he thought he had ruined his chances, but he made the fourth class and started training on June 1, 1946, graduating on May 31, 1947.

Carl was assigned to Westmoreland County, and he lived in New Stanton for seven years. Although he liked the area, he wanted to get back to his roots in Fulton County. So, when Fulton County became vacant he applied for a transfer but was denied. Carl said that he wasn't the type of guy to let things bother him, but this really did. Later, he was told to go and see Jay Gilford, the head of personnel at the division office. Jay handed Carl an envelope and when he opened it and saw that it was transfer papers, ordering him to go to Fulton County, he said, "I just put in for this transfer and you disapproved it. Now you're ordering me to go?"

"That's right," Jay said. "If we had approved the request you would have had to pay for the transfer, but now the agency will pay the moving expenses."

At that time Fulton County was known as the dust bowl, because only a few roads were paved. One of the first cases Carl worked on came from information received from a woman who had it in for her husband because he beat her. She told Carl that her husband had killed a deer illegally, and the meat was in the freezer. Carl got a search warrant and then went to the home. In the basement, he found the freezer, just as the woman had said, but when it was opened he found that the contents had thawed and the freezer was half full of water. Carl picked up one of the pieces of freezer paper floating on the water and noticed "Dear Stake" written on it. He got a big chuckle out of that.

To get even with her husband the woman had unplugged the freezer because her husband loved deer meat. At the time, the young man never admitted to illegally shooting the deer, but Carl ran into him 30 years later and he asked Carl if he remembered searching his house. When Carl said that he did the man said, "I want you to know that I shot the deer at night with a light."

An active law enforcement officer, Carl made many arrests over the years and, of course, many enemies. Carl and his wife were having a house built when one night it caught fire. The house burned to the ground, and it was later learned that someone had put gasoline in the home and set it on fire. Although the police investigation ruled it had been arson, no evidence as to who had set the fire could be found.

Some time before, a man Carl had arrested and had lost his hunting privileges had been going around town telling everyone that he was going to get even. Eventually, Carl arrested the man's brother, and he admitted that it was his brother who had set the house on fire. Because no one was present at the time of the confession, the police said it wouldn't hold up in court. Fortunately, Carl had the house insured.

I asked Carl if anyone had ever pointed a gun at him, and he said that it happened twice. The first time occurred when Carl asked to check a hunter's license, and the man said, "You want to check my gun. Here it is." He pointed the gun directly at Carl. Carl quickly grabbed the barrel, taking the gun from him. The man, who had a hen pheasant in his coat, had just gotten out of a mental institution.

The second time occurred during the late '50s on the last day of the small game season. Carl received information that a man had killed a deer, so he got a search warrant and enlisted the help of the fish warden. The man's wife told them that her husband was out hunting. The search warrant was served and illegal deer meat was found. While they were loading the meat

in their vehicle, the woman came out on the porch and rang a bell. It wasn't long before the man returned, and after seeing what was going on, he pointed a shotgun at them and said that the officers weren't going to arrest him. After some pretty fast talking, Carl got the man to put down the gun.

The man wanted to settle out of court and pay the fine in cash on what then was called a field receipt. Carl thought that from the way the house looked, the man would never have \$100 to pay the fine. The man told Carl to follow him out into a field to a fence post, which he started to pace away from. He then took a shovel and started digging until he found a jug. The jug was opened, and Carl was given all of the fine money in old bills from before 1928, when paper money was much larger. The man told Carl there was no need for him to think about coming back later to dig up the jug because he was going to move it to a new hiding place.

Carl spent the rest of his career in Fulton County, retiring in 1978. During those years he was told many times to put in for advancement, but that meant an office job and Carl liked the field too much.

Carl was known to be a practical joker. Once he attended a sportsmens club meeting in Westmoreland County, where a group sitting on the clubhouse porch was watching a quail feeding in the yard. All of a sudden the bird jumped into the air, fell on the ground, flopped a little and then died. Carl was curious as to what had killed the quail, so he packed it in dry ice and sent it off to be examined. He received a letter saying that nothing could be found wrong with the quail. Carl quickly typed up a letter that read, "Well, in that case send it back and I'll stock it again."

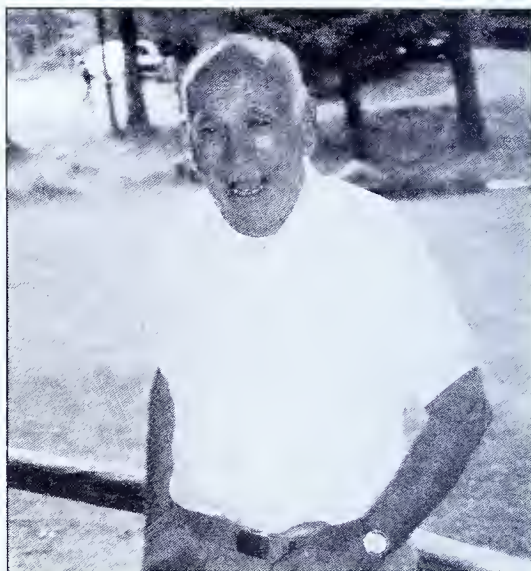
Through the years officers have been required to send in jaw bones from roadkilled deer to determine the age, and one time Carl sent in a jawbone that had the teeth drilled and filled, along with a note saying that it was probably the oldest deer he had ever seen.

District Justice Ed Palmer liked to ride with Carl on night patrol, and one night Ed called him about shooting going on near his place. Carl went to pick him up, and they staked out the area where the shooting had occurred. It wasn't long before an old beat up car stopped, and two guys got out and went into a field then dragged out a big doe. They were putting it in the vehicle when apprehended. Carl got the gun the guys were using, but it turned out to be worse than the car. It was an old Damascus single barrel shotgun that had neither a hammer nor a trigger. "How did you guys shoot the deer with this thing?" Carl asked.

One man answered, "I aim the gun, and we stick a nail through the firing pin hole. He hits the nail with a hammer and the gun goes off. If you're going to shoot the gun, watch it, because the hinge action flies open and kicks the empty case out past your head."

One night Ed was with Carl on patrol when they picked up some men who had been drinking and were trying to poach a deer. It ended up they had to take the men to the justice of the peace office to cite them. When they got there Ed quickly ran around to the back door so he could open the front door from the inside. The men never noticed that the justice of the peace was one of the men who had stopped them in the field. They pled guilty to the charge and spent some time in jail.

One afternoon while helping a neighboring officer cast bullets, the officer told Carl that every night at ex-



Bill Bower

CARL retired from the Game Commission in 1978, and he and his wife now reside in McConnellsburg.

actly 9:15 he heard shooting but could never catch who was doing it. He requested that Carl stay over to help him that night. Sure enough at about 9:15 shots rang out, but Carl thought that something didn't sound quite right. After some investigation they discovered that tar barrels stored near the house heated up during the day, and after the sun went down they cooled off, causing the popping.

Carl worked during a time when there were no radios, no state vehicles and little contact with the division office. Although he knew he was never going to be rich, Carl was happy in what he was doing. Through the years, because he was such a good example for young officers to follow, Carl was assigned many students from the training school.

Carl retired from the Game Commission in 1978, yet even near the end of his career he was a law enforcement man, making more arrests than many younger officers. Carl and his wife now reside in McConnellsburg. They raised two daughters, and now have one grandson.

We in the Game Commission think these early "game wardens" should be remembered, and hope you do, too. □

Pennsylvania's Elk Trap and Transfer Project

By Rawland D. Cogan

Wildlife Biologist, PGC

Robert Cordes & Jon DeBerti

Graduate Students, Frostburg State University

EXACTLY when the last eastern elk fell in many eastern states is not clear, but by the late 1800s elk were gone east of the Great Plains and not doing well in the West. Elk were protected in national parks such as Yellowstone, and as those herds grew, many eastern states began trap and transfer projects to bring these large herbivores back. Attempts in New York, Virginia and North Carolina were, for the most part, unsuccessful. Herds in Michigan and Pennsylvania prospered at first, but by the 1930s were not doing well.

Beginning in the 1970s, resource managers took an interest in our herd and by the early 1980s began to study the herd intensively. Since then not only has much been learned about elk, but the population in Pennsylvania is roughly four times what

it was only 20 years ago, numbering more than 620 animals today.

Pennsylvania is not alone in this regard. Through trap and transfer projects, elk are now established in Arkansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin and in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. Arkansas reintroduced elk in 1980, Wisconsin in 1995, Kentucky in 1997 and North Carolina in 2001. Elk reintroduction is currently under consideration in New York, Missouri and Virginia.

Pennsylvania's trap and transfer project was not to introduce elk into the state, but to expand the size of the population and range. Taking into consideration such things as human

Rawley Cogan



density, highways, agriculture, public land, suitable habitat and elk behavior, we directed our transfer efforts to western Clinton County. This project was designed to expand Pennsylvania's elk range from 225 mi² to 835 mi², return elk to portions of their former range, increase the biodiversity of the Sproul State Forest and surrounding state forests, reduce elk densities in the traditional elk range, and reduce conflicts in the traditional range.

The project was a cooperative effort between the PGC, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (Forestry and Parks), Penn State University, Frostburg State University, Purdue University, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Safari Club International, Lehigh Valley Chapter.

The project goal was to trap and move 60 to 90 elk into western Clinton County between 1998-2000. Elk were released into their new home using a "soft release" technique; they were placed in a 5-acre acclimation enclosure for several weeks to give them time to recover from the handling and acclimate to the area.

Over a 2-year period, thanks largely to students from Frostburg State University, we monitored 40 different radio-collared elk, averaging more than 100 locations/year on each collared elk, which is about one location every three days.

Movements

How far will elk move after release? Will they stay near the release site? Will they return to the trap site? Will the cows stay together? What types of habitat will they use? These were some of the questions running through our minds as we cut the fence on the holding pen and set the elk free to explore their new homes. We soon had answers to these questions.

We anticipated initial movements

to be large while they explored their new surroundings, and we figured the elk would return to the release site after making exploratory trips. This was the case for all releases, although some elk took longer exploratory trips before returning to the release site.

Bulls are typically more nomadic than cows, but to our surprise, the morning following the 1998 release, the adult bulls were within a half mile of the release site, while most of the cows and calves were within three miles. By the second day a group of 18 cows and calves split into three groups, the farthest being 4½ miles from the release site. By the third day many of the elk had begun to move back toward the release site, but nine elk (one cow and eight calves) had moved north 9½ miles to the Hamersley Wild area.

At this point we began to breathe a little easier, because the elk did not seem to be trying to get back "home," where they had been trapped. Actually, during the entire study, no elk went "home." Eventually most of the elk did return to the holding pen, although the group that moved to Hamersley Wild Area and eventually into the Kettle Creek Drainage, took almost a month to return. This group made several trips to the release site from the Kettle Creek drainage and then suddenly moved 20 miles west.

Early the next morning following the 1999 release we were anxiously tracking elk. The cows and calves, we found, were in two groups within a mile of the holding pen. We then shifted our attention to the bulls. Several were located near the cows and calves but, surprisingly, one adult bull was still inside the holding pen, bedded in a hemlock thicket where he had spent time for several weeks while in the holding pen. He obviously felt very secure there, and he should have, because WCOs, deputies, land managers and Sproul State Forest personnel provided 24-hour security until the elk were released. We are most grateful to all of them for the job they did. Elk returned

to the holding pen on many occasions and were observed inside and outside the holding pen, sometimes spending several days inside.

As expected, however, we had three elk that made large unusual movements. Two weeks after release an adult bull moved 18 miles north, to the village of Germania. He remained there and made occasional sallies to the west rim of Pine Creek and to the Sweden Valley area, perhaps searching for other elk. This bull never returned to the holding pen. He died of unknown causes (we suspect a wind blown tree struck him) in September.

By the end of the study, the farthest movement of any translocated elk we know was the 38.9 air miles that this bull traveled to Germania. Another unusual movement was by an adult cow that moved 22 air miles south of the holding pen. The cow later returned to the Sinnemahoning valley within a few miles of the holding pen. Another adult cow moved 18 miles west to an area within a mile of her capture site. She spent several days with other elk using the area and then went back to within four miles of the release site and gave birth to a calf. After a month or so of their release, most elk had settled into their new surroundings.

Using a soft release, we had hoped elk would become acclimated to the release site and frequently use and return to the site. Almost every elk during the study returned to the release site at least once, many made frequent trips. We expected elk to "settle" into areas by the calving season in June. By

evaluating daily movements of cows, we found that movements were greatest following release (April) and dramatically decreased by June. During the early 1990s we learned that cow elk move less prior to calving and continue using smaller areas until the calf is mobile, usually within a week after birth. As their calves grew and became stronger, cows began making larger movements.

Home Ranges

Knowing home range sizes provides insights into an animal's behavior and ecology. With translocated animals, we expect a period of adjustment as they explore and select areas that contain the food, cover and water resources needed, but that they then settle into these smaller, more defined areas.

Studies of elk home ranges conducted in the 1980s in the traditional range indicated that a bull's average yearly home range size was 20.5 mi²

HOW FAR WILL elk move after release? Will they stay near the release site? Will they return to the trap site? Will the cows stay together? What types of habitat will they use? These were some of the questions running through our minds as we cut the fence on the holding pen and set the elk free to explore their new homes.

Rawley Cogan



(ranging from 10.5-33.5) and cows averaged 6.75 mi² (ranging from 2.5-17.0). We anticipated that yearly home ranges for translocated elk would be much larger initially and decrease by the second year after release. This appears to be the case, although, the only release that we can evaluate home ranges for two years is the 1998 release, and this group suffered significant mortalities halfway through the second year after release. This kept us from evaluating yearly home ranges for seven of the adult cows and two bulls. From the two remaining adult cows and bulls, we found in most cases that the annual home ranges decreased from the first year to the second year after release (Figure 1). We also found that home ranges of the translocated elk are much larger than what was found in the traditional range in the late 1980s, and that once elk did settle into their new areas, their home range size did get smaller.

Survival

Survival of the translocated elk (Table 1) is another important factor, and to evaluate this, we really can use

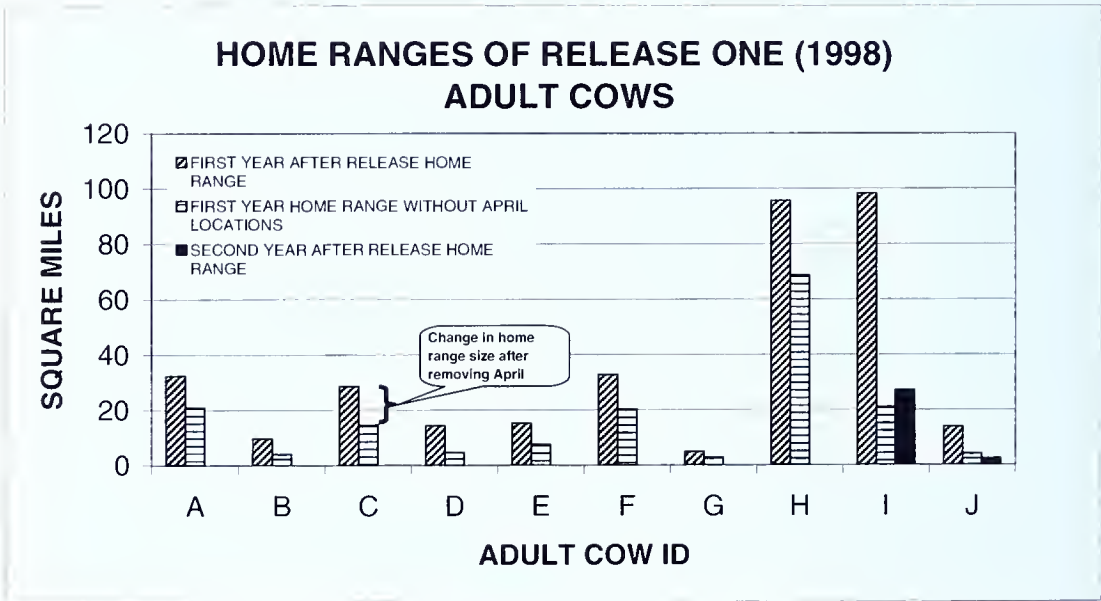
only radio-collared elk (we can never be certain of the fate of uncollared elk). We expected mortality to be higher among translocated elk, as they explored new areas and encountered unexpected hazards.

During the first year after the 1998 release, only four mortalities were documented. Most mortality occurred during the second year after release. During this time, we had unusually dry weather that caused wildlife to move into the river bottoms. This exposed elk to man-related factors such as crop damage kills, trains and automobiles. Survival was initially good, but by 2001 only 31 percent of the 1998 elk had survived. By March 2001, survival of the 1999 release was 53 percent and 92 percent for the 2000 release. Illegal kills were also documented during the study. At least six animals were shot and left lay by poachers.

Calving

During the three years of the study, translocated cows have produced 30 calves, and 18 of 21 cows calved the first year following release. Cows typically don't produce their first calf until the age of three, but we documented three 2-year-old cows that produced calves.

Figure 1



KNOWN ELK MORTALITY OF TRANSLOCATED ELK AND THEIR OFFSPRING SINCE 1998

Cause	Male			Female			Total
	Adult	Yearling	Calf	Adult	Yearling	Calf	
Crop Damage	3			3	1	2	9
Train	1			5			6
Automobile	4			1			5
Illegal		2		2(2*)			4(6)
Unknown	1	1					2
Brainworm		2					2
Transport injuries						1	1
Total	9	5	0	11(13)	1	3	29

* If the two cows that disappeared from Kettle Creek are included

Table 1

Cows that calf in June following their release were bred prior to the translocation. We, of course, were interested in monitoring the breeding that took place after the releases. We found that 75 percent and 50 percent of the cows produced a calf the second year following releases in, respectively, 1998 and 1999. (In Pennsylvania, the reproductive rate averages 68 percent for cows three or more years old). Translocated elk apparently were able to find mates and cows successfully produced young.

Habitat Use

We determined that the 40 elk, the first two years of the project, spent their time in 851,114 acres in Cameron, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Potter and Tioga counties, which includes more than 67 percent public land (state forests, game lands and state parks). Radio-collared elk remained within an average of 2,733 feet from any major stream, with 28 percent of the locations within 500 feet of a stream (Again, this may have been influenced by the dry weather during the study).

As elk are grazing animals, herbaceous openings are an important habitat type. This study area contains more than 580 miles of pipeline and electric power-line

rights-of-way. All collared elk have used these rights-of-ways during this study, indicating that they are an important habitat component. We are currently working with the utility companies to improve many of the rights-of-ways for wildlife. In addition to these herbaceous areas, there are 308 acres of wildlife food plots. Seventy percent of the collared elk were located within 500 feet of a planted area at least once during the study.

Conclusion

Pennsylvania's elk trap and transfer project was designed to expand the range here. Today there are more elk in Pennsylvania than at any time in current history, and they are using areas they haven't occupied in at least 50 years. We've learned a great deal along the way about elk and people. We have shared this knowledge with other eastern states as they plan their elk re-introduction programs.

After disappearing more than a century ago elk are now back home, not just in northcentral Pennsylvania but in several states east of the Great Plains. □

Lord Baltimore Visits Pennsylvania

By Connie Mertz

IN THE 17th century a stark orange and black bird so intrigued colonists in Maryland that it was named after Lord Baltimore. Today, this lovely songbird is still called the Baltimore oriole. It's the male that contrasts a vivid orange against a black upper back, wings and head. Females are colorful as well, with their yellowish-orange lower body against an olive-brown upper body and head, but they can also have orange and black markings similar to the male's.

Spotting a pair of Baltimore orioles is a delightful discovery, but many times their presence is known only by their singing. Neotropicals, they re-

turn to Pennsylvania from Central America, or the northern tip of South America, in late spring. The males are said to arrive when apple blossoms are in bloom. Males establish breeding territories, which are only a few acres, usually in the same vicinity as the previous year. There they will sing from perches, and countersinging often occurs between nearby males.

When the females arrive, the focus changes to courtship. It's as if Lord Baltimore is bowing before his lady in a courtship display. With head bowed, wings and tail fanned, and back exposed to show off his vibrant beauty, the male oriole puts on quite an impressive show, twitching his head up and down. While going through this ritual, he continues his singing. He may also do "song-flight," an aerial display that appears to be a slow-motion flight, while simultaneously singing his tune. The birdsong during courtship is a series of four to eight whistling sounds that can vary in pitch. Keen observers will also hear a rapid chatter call when the pair returns to their nest. Not to be confused with the alarm call, which is a two-note *teetooo-teetooo*, the chatter-call is usually a communication call between mates.

Despite its popularity, little study has been done on Baltimore orioles. It's their nest that receives most of the attention. The interesting looking pendulum nest is the creative genius of the female. She intricately weaves plant fibers, usually from milkweed stalks, horsehair, grasses and grape bark, one wall at a time. The fibrous material appears knotted at the ends, and





to the side before taking the big plunge.

At Camp Brule in Sullivan County one summer, campers were fascinated with a Baltimore oriole nest, and watched the parents feeding the young birds and listening to their calls. Ironically, the nest was suspended over water. We wondered if the young birds re-

is caused by the way she rapidly twists her head while constructing and shaping the nest. After completion in five to eight days, she lines the nest with cottony materials, such as dandelion or willow fuzz. Occasionally, an old nest is repaired, or materials are taken from it to complete a new nest. The nest is attached to tree branches with long fibers, and is curved underneath a high branch, often 30 feet above ground. Preferring elm, maple, willow or apple trees, orioles will use other trees for nesting. Always attached to the tips of branches with an oval opening at the top, there is little concern about predators, because few natural enemies are able to venture out on such a flimsy limb.

About four pale blue or grayish-white oval eggs are laid inside. Each egg is blotched with brown and black markings. Incubation is complete in two weeks, and both parents feed the hungry brood. The nestlings are at the mercy of the winds, but the nest is extremely resilient against the elements. In fact, gentle rocking seems to quiet them between feedings. When they are ready to fledge, it's common for the young to climb outside the nest and cling

ceived swimming lessons.

After leaving the nest, fledglings still pester their parents to be fed. After a week or two, the female leaves the juveniles in the care of her mate, while she goes off to molt. Once molting is complete, they start on their migration route.

To what extent deforestation of their tropical habitat has changed migration routes of Baltimore orioles is uncertain, but they seem to adapt well to change. Elms, now succumbing to Dutch Elm Disease, were once their favorite nesting trees, but they appear to have no problem using other tree species.

There's a towering maple tree visible from my mother-in-law's home that is visited by a pair of Baltimore orioles every summer. We first listen to their birdsong, and then we scan the tree for a glimpse of the couple. Once spotted, we use binoculars for an up close and personal view throughout the summer. Baltimore orioles truly are an exceptional pleasure for backyard birdwatchers. □

Turkey Management

Area 7B Nesting Update

By Mary Jo Casalena

PGC Wildlife Biologist

IN OUR EFFORTS to learn why turkey populations are depressed in TMA 7B, we had 50 radio-tagged hens (17 subadults, which are females going into their first spring breeding season, and 33 adults) at the beginning of the nesting season last year. We considered nesting season to begin on April 27, the first date a hen began incubating — which also happens to be the average date of incubation from previous studies in Pennsylvania. Even though spring green-up was early last year, nesting on the study area did not seem to begin early. The timing of nesting is triggered more by the amount of daylight than by weather.

Between May 4 and May 13, 2000, five hens (two subadults, three adults) died. None were incubating prior to death, so they were recorded as hens that did not attempt to nest. Of the 17 subadults that entered nesting season, nine (53 percent) incubated at least one nest and one subadult hen re-nested after abandoning her first nest (she successfully hatched her second clutch). Subadult hens hatched six nests.

Wild Turkey Research Coordinator MARY JO CASALENA inspecting a hatched turkey nest. Sixty-six percent of the hens in the TMA 7B study last spring were successful at hatching broods.

Of the 33 adult hens, 24 (73 percent) initiated incubation and 15 (63 percent) successfully hatched their nests. Overall, 31 of 50 (62 percent) hens incubated at least one nest (only one re-nested), and 21 (66 percent) were successful at hatching. Compared to research conducted in other areas, our hens exhibited low nesting rates (attempts at incubation), but high nest success (hatching a nest).

Counts were conducted four weeks after hatching to determine survival of young turkeys (poults). Of the 21 hens that hatched nests, five died (four killed by predators, one cause of death unknown) prior to the 4-week poult count. We assume their poults also were killed, but it is possible that another mature hen was present when the brood hen died and adopted the poults. Most hens, however, do not join into multiple brood flocks until four weeks after hatch.

Tim Flanigan





Bob D'Angelo

YOUNG POULTS subjected to heavy or continual rain are very susceptible to mortality from exposure.

Two different types of counts were used. When possible, personnel used telemetry to approach as close to a hen as possible and then used a recorded lost poult call to bring the hen and her brood within visual range. Flush counts were used when a hen and her brood would not respond to the recorded calls.

Survival of the 4-week-old poults was low. Only 7 of the 16 hens (44 percent) had at least one poult alive at four weeks. Three of these hens were already part of multiple brood flocks. The other four hens were alone with their broods. Of the four hens that had not flocked yet, here is the breakdown of poult survival: 1 of 11 poults that hatched, 7 of 8, 1 of 9, and 3 of 9 were still alive (32 percent poult survival). The ratio of all hens (successful and unsuccessful) to poults was 1:0.9.

Overall, the spring/summer period last year started on a positive note with average to good nest success and ended on a low note with poor poult survival. From the contacts we made with the public, DCNR, PA Chapter National Wild Tur-

key Federation volunteers, and PGC staff throughout the study area, few brood flocks were observed and sightings were made regularly of hens without poults during the late summer.

Our study on TMA 7B showed that last year 63 percent of radio-marked hens made it through incubation and successfully hatched their eggs, but poult survival was poor. We can only speculate, but rain nearly every day just after the peak hatch was the most probable cause of the poor survival rate.

Young poults subjected to heavy or continual rain are very susceptible to mortality from exposure. Even though poult survival was low last year, poult survival the year before was high, as indicated by our turkey sighting surveys. Annual variations are typical, and make it apparent why multi-year studies are necessary for understanding trends in wildlife populations.

Five turkeys were legally harvested by hunters during the fall 2000 season in TMA 7B, which ran from October 28-November 4. Hunters are allowed to harvest radio-tagged and leg-banded turkeys. Hunters may keep the leg bands after reporting their kill to the Game Commission, but transmitters must be returned so they can be re-used.

To report your harvest of a study turkey, please call one of the following: PGC Bureau of Wildlife Management, 717-787-5529; PGC Southcentral Region Office (toll free) 1-877-877-9107; or the Michaux State Forest District Office, 717-352-2211. □



THE CROSS FOX

Penn's Woods Sketchbook/Bob Sopchick

EVAN SLEPT IN THE CHAIR with his feet propped on the windowsill, waking occasionally to check the sky. He would leave the city at first light. The heat was off in the second floor apartment, but he was warm in the depths of his father's wool coat. The coat still smelled like him, of country and city, farmer and ironworker.

He sat up and watched a line of people forming on the sidewalk waiting for the soup kitchen to open. One man had a fire built in a wheelbarrow that he pushed along with him. Their clothes had the same gray patina as the city, their faces the same ashen tone his father had when he died five days before. He recalled his father's withered form, a rind of humanity, lost in this big wool coat, sitting in this same chair. It was the city killed him quicker than the cancer. It got hold of him and sucked the hope from his bones. The cancer just took what was left.

They never should have left the farm, but his father thought that the ends of the rainbows vaulting over their mountain arced into the city, and that is where they would find their fortune. He rented their farm to Evan's uncle who worked it for three years. At the funeral his uncle handed Evan a ring of keys and told him that he was moving his family back east, that the farm was not working out, especially with the Depression on. Evan made immediate plans to move back.

When the sky grayed he pried a floorboard up and removed two socks heavy with coins. One held nine dollars in pennies, the other mostly silver, around \$70 in all, saved from odd jobs and what he got for their few possessions. He tightened the knots and put the money in his coat, shouldered his duffel and left by the fire escape.

HE WALKED THROUGH the frozen railyard where a trio of elderly women with buckets picked up coal spilled from the hopper cars. From a distance they looked like crows walking about, dressed as they were in their black coats and black babushkas. Evan climbed the hopper car and kicked chunks of coal down to them. He waited by a bridge, and when a line of boxcars slowed he climbed aboard, helped by a strong hand thrust from an open door. The man's wife and two small boys sat huddled together under a blanket. They were on their way to live with relatives in Pittsburgh.

The train chugged on for an hour and the boys played with a top, trying to spin it as best they could without a string. Evan found some in his duffel, cut a length and cut it in half again. He wound the top and set it singing across the floor. He tied the other half in a loop and showed them how to play cat's cradle. When the freight stopped at a crossroads town Evan stood and bid them well, lobbed the sock of pennies to the young father, and jumped from the car.

He caught a ride north to Punxatawney, and at a hardware bargained with the clerk for a Model 92 Winchester in .32-20 from a long rack of consignment guns. The rifle was in good shape, with a clean bore and slick lever action. He bought a hunting license, rubber boots and several boxes of cartridges.

"Let's make it \$11 even," said the clerk. "They say you can shoot buck or doe this season."

"I can't wait," said Evan. "I haven't hunted in a couple of years."

Evan got a ride on a lumber truck heading northwest, and it was dusk when he got out at the intersection of a mountain road. He stood there listening to the wind sigh in the pines, the aroma filling his nose, then his soul. At the top of the rutted lane the white farmhouse glowed in the last rays of the day. From the porch he surveyed the dark rim of surrounding hills while an owl in the pines welcomed him home.

It snowed hard the next day, and Evan was busy in the tool shed. He found some lumber in the rafters and made a long, narrow hunting sled. The sled slipped easily between trees, and for two days he hauled firewood in on it. At a nearby village he bought food and supplies and had a load of coal delivered. A neighboring farmer sold him some chickens and feed.

For Evan, the long, cruel winter of 1931 was an ocean of time when he could reacquaint himself with the countryside. He sighted-in the rifle, and killed a sleek doe on the first day of deer season. He slid the deer in on his sled and butchered it and made jerky and smoked the hams. From the tanned hide he stitched a pair of knee-high snow gaiters.

Late one afternoon he was down in the coal cellar filling the scuttle, when he caught movement just outside the window. It was a fox unlike any he had ever seen, black as coal with grayish flanks, its face spotted with white. Evan could see the slit pupils of its eyes, like beetles caught in amber. He saw then that the white spots were not markings or snow, but feathers. The fox picked up a white hen at its feet and trotted off, stiff-legged, ears back.

He tracked the black fox all the next day, relentlessly, quitting only when the trail wound into a rocky, near vertical ravine above a roaring falls. He dragged himself up the lane in full dark and crossed sparkling fresh fox tracks leading from the coop. A second hen was gone, killed only minutes before. He repaired the hole in the henhouse floor and went to bed too tired to eat.

EVAN WANDERED FAR into the hills that winter, driving every particle of city grime from his pores. He hunted gray foxes, killing several, and would collect the \$4 bounty on each from the Game Commission. Come spring, he hoped to have enough bounty money for some hogs, or maybe a cow. He always kept an eye out for the black fox, but only saw its familiar tracks.

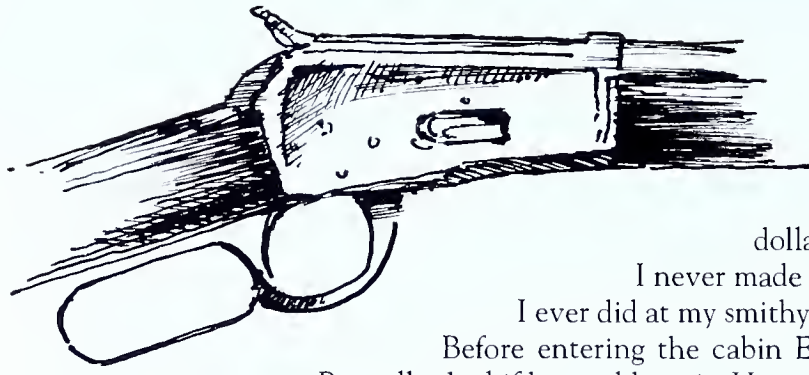
He came upon a cabin on a distant ridge, drawn to it by a bell-like ringing. A barrel-chested Chow dog came roaring at him from an outbuilding and pulled up short, white teeth bared in front of its blue tongue. A tall man peered out of the building and shouted, "Khan! Get back!" He was holding a glowing axe head with tongs, and motioned for Evan to enter.

Evan watched him work the axe head on the anvil, alternately heating and hammering until he was satisfied. "Huntin today are ya?" asked the tall man.

"Yeah, for fox. I'm Evan Styles. I got a farm out across from here."

"So, you're the guy's been trackin up this woods. I'm Tom Prowell.





Let's get you some coffee."

A bobcat hung between two gray foxes from a porch rafter. "That cat pays fifteen dollars. The Depression's on and

I never made so much money. More than

I ever did at my smithy shop down in Coulter."

Before entering the cabin Evan unloaded his gun and Prowell asked if he could see it. He worked the action a couple of times, shouldered it, examined it closely.

"Where'd you get this gun?"

"At a hardware near Punxatawney."

"I'll give you fifteen dollars for it — what I'll get for the cat — and I bet that's twice what you paid."

"It's a sweet shootin gun. Not too big, not too small. Fits me perfect."

"Maybe you want to trade instead. I got a Model 95 Winchester .30-40. Nice deer gun, almost new." Prowell took it down from a rack.

It was a beautiful rifle, serious looking, but heavy. "Let me think on it," said Evan.

They talked for a long while, those kindred spirits of the winter woods. When Evan mentioned the black fox Prowell's eyes narrowed. "That's what they call a cross fox. I lost the best hound a man could have to that fox. Belle slipped off a ledge down in the big ravine. I've been huntin the cross fox for two years now."

EARLY ONE MORNING after a blizzard Evan saw the cross fox mousing in a distant hedgerow. He packed enough things for a day's hunt, and set out on its track. He followed it far up into the hills to a rundown homestead. While ducking under a windfall he drove his rifle's muzzle into a snowbank. He unloaded the rifle and leaned it against a log, then hung his coat and pack on a branch. He cut a goldenrod stalk to unplug the barrel with, stripping it to the right diameter while stepping back. Suddenly the earth gave way beneath him, and he fell into an abandoned well, landing hard.

His ribs throbbed and he had the wind knocked out of him, but was not hurt. He looked up and saw that the well was hidden by weeds and blackberry canes bent with snow. The inside of the well was glazed with thick ice from a trickling seep, but there was only a few inches of water in the bottom. The skeleton of an unfortunate deer laying in the well unnerved him.

After calming down, he perched on a section of a mossy log and assessed his situation. No one would look for him, nor hear his shouts, and that meant he had to climb out. He studied the skeleton and formed a plan. If he could secure deer bones into the icy sidewalls like handholds he could climb out. He was small and light, so the bones would not have to bear much weight. He had dropped his knife on top, and needed a tool to chip away at the ice. He removed the square buckle from his belt and pounded it into the split end of a legbone with a sharp corner pointing out, then lashed it tight with a leather lace from a gaiter. Now he had an ice pick of sorts, and went to work. He figured it would take five anchored bones to reach the top. Evan worked all night and by morning had two legbones in place. He waited for the trickling water to freeze in around them, and the next day they were solid as steel spikes.

It took almost another day to place the next bone. The hours dragged by. He became

giddy when a full moon smiled down, like a familiar face, and grew forlorn when it passed. A fox yapped nearby, and he wondered if it was the cross fox. He hit rock on the next attempt and had to begin again, then set the final bone, summoning all his patience while he waited on the log for the handhold to freeze.

A crow called at pink light and Evan scaled the slick wall gingerly. At the lip of the well he reached for a dangling tree root, only inches away, when the bone handhold snapped, and he slid straight down, breaking off two others. He recalled a dead mouse he once found in a milkcan, and waves of panic surged through him. He whirled madly about, like a dervish, laughing and crying simultaneously. He became very cold and tired and slumped onto his mossy perch, void of any thought or emotion.

An hour or a half a day passed, he knew not which. A flock of chickadees flitted over, beyond them a brilliant cobalt sky. In their song he found an inner strength that would not let him resign to this fate. It was the song of the living. He would begin his work again, and was thankful that if he died it would be in the bosom of this mountain, his bones among those of the deer he loved to hunt.

That night Evan drifted between sleep and delirium and was awakened in the morning by snow that plopped onto the back of his neck. He looked up through the falling crystals at the face of the Chow dog whose loud barking echoed in the well.

Prowell's silhouette appeared. "I bet I could offer you a quarter for this rifle right now and you'd take it."

"Maybe, but I'd like some time to think about it," shouted Evan.

"Well, take your time, neighbor. We'll come back tomorrow."

A moment later a length of rope spiraled down.

AT DUSK, on a warm spring day in June, Evan heard frantic squawking in the henhouse. He grabbed his rifle and from the yard spotted the white form of a freshly killed hen being carried away by the cross fox. The fox was heading for a crab thicket and Evan swung the bead out in front of the white shape then up a bit and fired. The chicken fell but he didn't know that he had killed the fox until he walked out.

That night, he disassembled the rifle on the kitchen table for a thorough cleaning. When he removed the metal butt plate he saw some carving in the end grain. It read "T.P. 1898." This was Tom Prowell's gun, no doubt. He would have been about 16 years old when he carved his initials in it.

The next day, Evan knocked at Prowell's door. "I got a gun and a black fox here if you're interested in doing a trade."

"I don't know," said Prowell grinning. "That's an awfully old gun and there's no bounty on cross fox. I'd have to think on it."



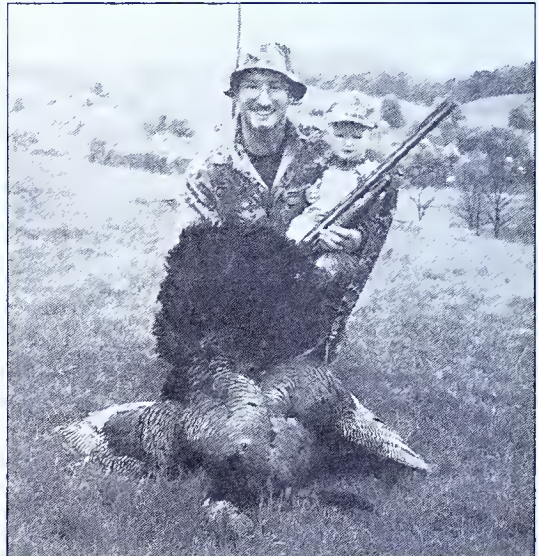
Beards &



RALPH SNODGRASS, Stewartstown, left, says the proof is in the pudding. He called this Tioga County longbeard in with his own Lightning Strike box call. **MARK HUGHES**, Uniontown, above, took his gobbler in Fayette County.



PEARL OWEN, Midlothian, Virginia, got her gobbler in Lycoming County last spring. She's new to turkey hunting, and her son called this bird in. Way to go, Pearl!



Air Force Lieutenant **RODNEY BAGLEY**, Petersburg, finally got some leave from service, including a tour in Bosnia, to bag this bird near State College last spring. His son, **JACOB**, ponders the day when he'll be chasing gobblers.

Spurs



PAUL and JERRY WEAKLAND, Lilly, above, with their white gobbler killed on state game lands in Blair County last spring. BEN MOYER, Farmington, right, with his Greene County tom taken last year.



SEAN SIRNIC, Jeannette, and his son, Joey, proudly display an opening day gobbler taken in Westmoreland County.



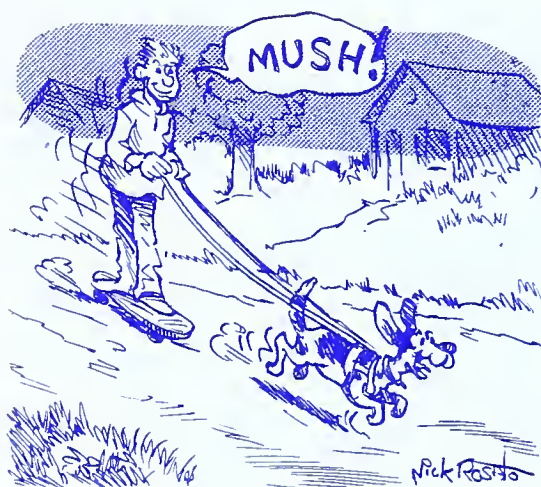
ZACHARY SCHRECKENGOST, Osceola Mills, called in and bagged his first turkey late in the season in Clearfield County.

FIELD NOTES

By Design

BRADFORD — After a couple of months looking for a place to live, my wife and I finally found a home to rent. The first night at our new place we were painting when I noticed something fly from the living room to the kitchen. I yelled to my wife that a bird was in the house, but then she started screaming that it was a bat. It took me a while to catch and relocate the little brown bat, then I called my landlord to see if he had had problems with bats in the house before. After a couple of days of wondering why he rented to “the game warden,” I think I may have the answer: pest control.

— WCO MATTHEW M. GREBECK,
EAST SMITHFIELD



“Board Dogs”

CLARION — I noticed a young man who had a beagle on a leash who was being pulled on a skateboard. I’ve heard of sled dogs, but how would you refer to this breed?

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Wow!

HUNTINGDON — Deputy Tim Hughes and I saw nine bears during the first two days of buck season.

— WCO JOHN B. ROLLER, HUNTINGDON

Successful Technique

While hunting during the muzzleloader season I heard a deer grunt in the distance, so I grunted back. The deer grunted in reply, so again, I grunted back. This went on for some time until the deer finally came within range, and I bagged the doe. The hunt was just as exciting as calling in a gobbler.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Something Fishy Going On

ADAMS — Francis (Pud) Eberhart loves to fish as well as hunt, and on the first day of buck season he did a little trout fishing. He decided to fish the next day as well, and while driving to his spot he ran into a deputy waterways conservation officer who was checking deer hunters. When the deputy asked Pud if he had had any luck he answered, “I got three yesterday, and I hope I get three more today.” The deputy had an interesting look on his face until he noticed Pud’s fishing vest and realized he was talking about trout.

— WCO LARRY D. HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

Not a Bad Idea

UNION — At a display we had a full body mount of an elk that had been killed some years ago by a hunter who said he mistook it for a deer, and nearly all who saw it at the show couldn’t believe anyone could make such an error. One lady even suggested that we put the hunter on display rather than the elk.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Uh-Oh

SNYDER — I have a strict routine I follow when checking hunters, but it doesn’t include putting the hunting license in my pocket and finding it three days later. I guess I can say I’m thorough.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, MIDDLEBURG



Good Deal

Venison contains no antibiotics, chemical feed additives or growth hormones, and is also low in fat. The exercise you receive while hunting combined with the healthier meat may even allow you to shed a few pounds.

— ASST. REGIONAL FORESTER BRYCE L. HALL, RIDGWAY

It Figures

BEDFORD — I was getting ready to patrol one morning last fall when I noticed my truck had a flat tire, so I put the spare on but got another flat on a remote area of a state forest. I radioed dispatch to send my neighboring officer WCO Steve Leiendecker to come get me, and two hours later, after getting lost several times, he showed up and lent me his spare, which, you guessed it, was flat, too.

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

Almost

MONROE — I was showing PGC bear biologist Mark Ternent bears — including a 500-plus-pounder — inhabiting some suburban areas when, as Mark was carefully navigating a beaver dam, I reminded him that even biologists are susceptible to Field Notes. He said that he was only susceptible if he fell in, so I promptly gathered a snowball but Mark made it back to dry land before I could launch my attack. Oh well, I got a Field Note anyway.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Dual Use

DAUPHIN — During the sports show at the Farm Show complex in Harrisburg a young man asked if the deer weight measuring tape we sell works on people. I replied that it did not because deer and human dimensions are different, but later I tried it out on myself and was amazed to see it was within two pounds of my actual weight. I tried it on two other WCOs and found equally accurate results.

— WCO MARK FAIR, MIDDLETOWN

Bonus

JEFFERSON — I recently addressed the Jefferson County Chapter of PA CleanWays, an organization that identifies areas along roadways that are being used as dump sites, then designs plans to get the sites cleaned up. I talked about how we watch for littering on properties enrolled in our public access programs, and afterwards a landowner approached me about enrolling in our Safety Zone program. Co-operating with groups like PA CleanWays should not only make our rural areas more attractive, but may also open up more land for hunting and furtaking.

— WCO ROGER HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE

A Little Bit Country

BERKS — While conducting background investigations on officer trainee candidates, I not only spoke to a Glen Campbell but also his neighbor, George Jones.

— WCO CHUCK LINCOLN, LEESPORT

Needed Skates

CLARION — I watched a Cooper's hawk catch a red squirrel on a steep bank next to a road, but due to ice on the ground it had trouble getting airborne. The hawk took quite a ride, sliding down the hill on its back, with its wings extended, trying to stop. The last I saw of the bird it was sitting at the edge of the road with its catch, apparently debating its next move.

— WCO RODNEY E. BIMBER, LUCINDA

Appreciated

BRADFORD — In November I called a special meeting to honor two deputies who had retired. Deputy Bill Smith and Deputy Chris Davis have collectively served for 32 years, and through the years we have shared many memories. Here's a "tip of the old Stetson" to two officers who touched the lives of many.

— WCO VERNON I. PERRY, III, MONROETON

Close But Not Quite

CHESTER — On the first day of buck season I received a call about four elk hanging in a barn, and the caller was adamant that they were elk and not deer. Misidentification of wildlife is common here, so I was not too surprised to find the remains of four caribou that were legally taken in Canada.

— WCO MATT TEEHAN, UWCHLAND

Thank You, Evelyn

FULTON — While visiting Safety Zone Program cooperators I met 85-year-old Evelyn Clevenger, who has graciously allowed hunters on her property for many years. I spotted a copy of *Game News* on the table and Evelyn said she looks forward to the magazine each month.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Above and Beyond

WAYNE — After obtaining permission to trap turkeys on Bill and Carl Adam's farm in Damascus, I started placing corn in a small area to lure in the birds. Upon my return to replenish the bait I noticed Carl had already replenished it with his own silage. On the day I caught birds, Carl and Bill stopped their chores to help WCO Dan Figured and me untangle the birds from the net, place leg-bands on them, and crate them for shipping. Thanks to people like Carl and Bill, our turkey population will be preserved for many to enjoy for years to come.

— WCO FRANK J. DOOLEY, TYLER HILL

Growing and Expanding Population

POTTER — A fisher was caught by a trapper in the Kettle Creek area, about 12 miles from a valley where 25 had been released in 1994-95. I also picked up a roadkilled fisher north of Cross Fork, about 20 miles from a release site. Neither animal had ear tags (all released fishers were tagged) and both were adult males. From 1994-1998, approximately 200 fishers were released across forested areas in northern Pennsylvania.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE, CROSS FORKS



Little Buzzsaw

CUMBERLAND — Food and Cover Corp crew members Bob Johnston and Tom Black were cutting down some trees for deer browse when they encountered an irate homeowner. It seems the little guy didn't like being disturbed, so he ran down a tree, across Bob's chainsaw and headed straight for Tom. Bob said he looked up to see Tom running across a field with an angry gray squirrel on his heels.

— WCO EDWARD B. STEFFAN, NEWVILLE

Ice Fishing

TIOGA — Last February Hunter-Trapper Education instructor Scott Streeter noticed a dead deer frozen in the ice at Cowanesque Lake, with a bald eagle patiently picking at the exposed parts of the carcass.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE, MIDDLEBURY CENTER

Right Under His Nose

MONROE — During deer season neighboring WCO Pete Sussenbach apprehended two individuals for killing deer at night from the back porch of their summer home. Unfortunately for the violators, WCO Sussenbach heard the shots from inside his home, which is located a short distance down the road.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Adapted Quite Well

CLEARFIELD — I noticed a beaver sitting on an iced-over pond eating willow branches, and I was amazed to walk right up to it and grab it by the tail until I realized it was completely blind. I checked on the beaver several times after and found it to be surviving just fine.

— WCO DAVID A. CARLINI, CLEARFIELD

Best Bargain Around

GREENE — Several times during the season last fall I checked nonresident hunters who said the hunting opportunities in Pennsylvania are so good that a license here is a better value than their resident licenses.

— WCO RANDY R. CRAGO, CARMICHAELS



No Place Like Home

In late February a pair of eagles was seen at both an old and new nest on SGL 180. I wonder if there are two couples or it's the same pair checking out their old "digs?"

— LMO JOHN C. SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Take a Good Look

WARREN — I often receive negative comments about the cutting of timber on game lands. Truth is, our cuttings are designed to create habitat diversity and benefit many wildlife species. Take a walk around a timber sale on a game lands and you'll be surprised at the amount of wildlife sign.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, TIDIOUTE

Rare

SCHUYLKILL — Less than one percent of our black bears are brown and are known as "cinnamon" bears. Stanley Fidler, from Wayne Township, noticed what he thought was a brown cat killed on the road in front of his farm, but it turned out to be a cinnamon skunk.

— WCO STEPHEN S. HOWER, PINE GROVE

Sound of Music

GREENE — It looks like it will be another banner year for spring turkey hunters here. I've seen many groups of gobblers with as many as 20 longbeards in a flock. The hills came "alive" when these birds dispersed and began gobbling.

— WCO RODNEY L. BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Hiding Out

VENANGO — Each spring we collect jaw bones and embryos from does for biological information, and I recently picked up a 7-year-old deer, which is the oldest I've ever collected data on. The surprising thing about the deer was that it was hit by a car in downtown Oil City. I guess the oldest deer aren't necessarily in the woods.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Not Quite

While doing a school program I asked the kids if they knew why red foxes were brought over from England. Their teacher tried to help out by making motions like he was riding a horse when one youngster blurted out, "to be ridden like horses."

— WCO HAROLD COLE, SOUTHEAST REGION OFFICE, READING

Makes You Wonder

BUTLER/LAWRENCE — Wildlife Education Supervisor Kevin Thompson and I were giving a wildlife program at the Mohawk Elementary School when we asked the class what predator preys on skunks. When one student answered, “a really dumb one,” instead of the great horned owl, it did bring into question the old adage of “wise old owl.”

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PORTERSVILLE

Unsung Heroes

SOMERSET — I presented the Outstanding Hunter-Trapper Education Instructor Award to Dr. Gary Compton who made the point that all our instructors are outstanding. Without the time and commitment that these dedicated individuals provide, the task of educating the young sportsmen and women of the commonwealth would be impossible. My thanks to all of you for a job well done.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Smokin’

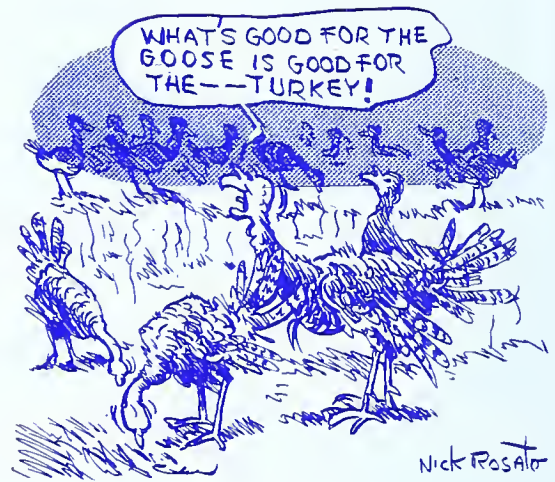
HUNTINGDON — We were trapping turkeys to transfer to the southeast when the net rockets caught a field on fire. *Game News* staff member Larissa Rose, who was taking photos, jumped in to help stamp out the fire only to have her pant cuffs catch on fire. We quickly extinguished the fire — both in the field and Larissa’s pants — and when we were sure she had not been hurt, everyone got a good chuckle out of it.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER,
HUNTINGDON

He Meant Well

BRADFORD — After firing the net over some turkeys to transfer them to the Southeast Region, my new neighboring officer, Matt Grebeck, got a little excited when he thought one of the birds was having trouble breathing so he used his knife to cut the net. The next time we trapped birds I was instructed by WCO Perry to search Matt to make sure he didn’t have a knife.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY



Buffer Zone

In a field where manure had just been spread I noticed about 300 geese feeding on one side with a 30-foot span between them and about 150 turkeys on the other side.

— LMO WAYNE LUGAILA, WATERFORD

Good Timing

LUZERNE — I stopped to ask directions from a man who was washing his deck, and as I pulled into the driveway I noticed a soaking wet raccoon run out from under the deck and head into nearby woods. A few minutes later the same raccoon reappeared and attacked the man’s dog, so I captured it to have it tested for rabies. Just before leaving the man said, “Now that’s what I call service.” (The raccoon did test positive for rabies.)

— WCO MATTHEW M. GREBECK, SHICKSHINNY

Checked Out

DELAWARE — I got a call to pick up three roadkilled deer, with one of them being in a grocery store parking lot. After getting two of the deer, I couldn’t locate the one at the grocery store, until I discovered a lone shopping cart in the middle of the lot with a buck upside down, its hind end and back legs sticking up out of the basket. Store employees didn’t know how it got there, but they were glad to see me.

— WCO DARREN J. DAVID, ASTON

Wild Sheep Foundation Contributes to PGC Education Efforts

By Dan Lynch

Southeast Region Wildlife Education Specialist

THE EASTERN Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS) has graciously donated \$4,000 to fund an educational project in southeastern Pennsylvania. The money was part of the Eastern FNAWS "grant-in-aid" program and has helped produce Enviro-PICK, which stands for "Environmental Portable Interactive Conservation Kits." These kits are part of the ongoing effort the PGC and Eastern FNAWS has towards educating all Pennsylvania youngsters about wildlife and the environment in interactive ways.

With these kits, students — and teachers — will be able to see and touch PA mammal pelts, skulls and other items designed to help satisfy some of the Environ-

ment and Ecology Standards proposed by the PA Department of Education. Using these supplemental, hands-on educational items, along with appropriate environmental curricula, teachers can help students identify and categorize certain Pennsylvania animals. These items also help teachers explain why certain animals are different colors, shapes and sizes and how these differences relate to their survival. The educational components also reinforce the importance of adaptations of many Pennsylvania animals.

Teachers in the Southeast Region can sign out Enviro-PICK kits free of charge after attending a free workshop sponsored by the Game Commission. For more information regarding workshops and the Enviro-PICK program, contact the Southeast Region Office at 610-926-3136 or (toll free) 877-877-9470.

FNAWS is an organization with grass roots efforts in conservation, education and research for not only wild sheep, but all wildlife and its habitat. For more information, contact the Eastern FNAWS office at P.O. Box 907, Ephrata, PA 17522 (717-733-7579).

THE AUTHOR (who designed the kits), Reed Steinmetz, Founder of Eastern FNAWS Chapter and Director Emeritus, Dale Gaugler, Life Member, and Rod Krebs, President of Eastern FNAWS pose with one of the Enviro-PICK educational kits in the game room of Mr. Stienmetz.



2000-01 Deer harvest: 504,600

HUNTERS TOOK 504,600 deer during Pennsylvania's 2000-2001 hunting seasons, up substantially from the 378,592 taken in 1999-00.

The 2000-01 antlered (buck) harvest was 203,221, compared to the 194,368 taken the year before. The 2000-01 antlerless harvest was 301,379, up substantially from the 184,224 taken in 1999-2000.

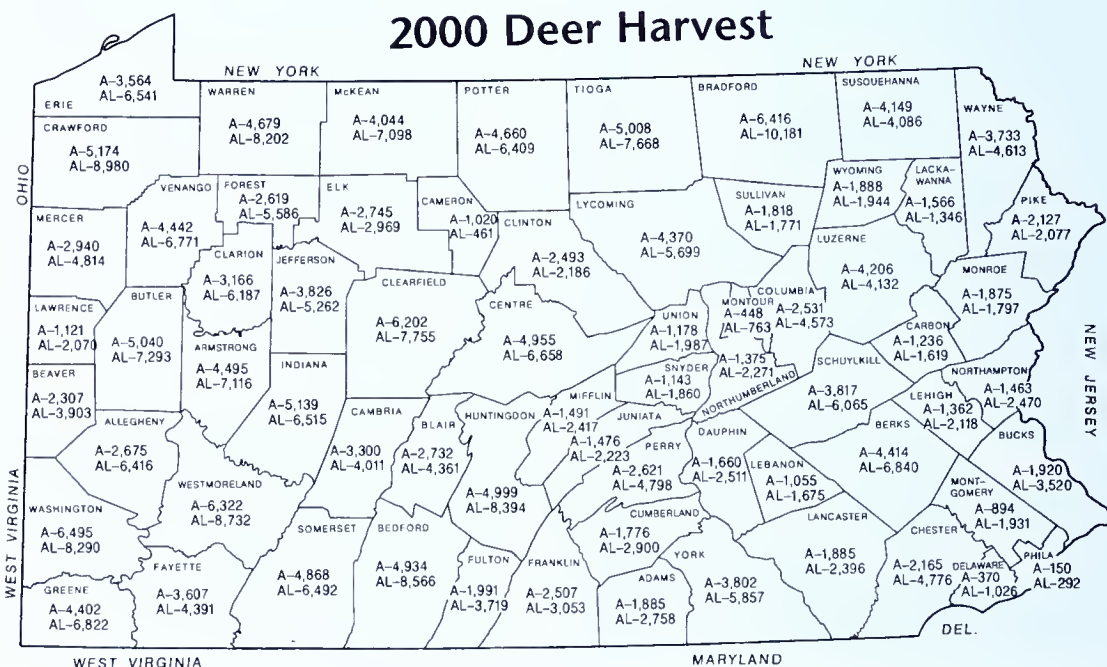
"The 2000-2001 deer hunting seasons provided hunters with greater opportunities, which were reflected in increased antlerless license sales, and nature cooperated by providing near perfect weather," said Dr. Gary Alt, Game Commission Deer Management Section supervisor. "This harvest was necessary just to stabilize the herd. But,

with this year's fawn production, we anticipate the statewide deer population this coming fall to be very similar to last fall's."

Each winter, using harvest results, the Game Commission projects what the previous fall's deer population was before the hunting season began. Using this year's harvest numbers, the agency projected that the statewide deer herd was 1.49 million before the 2000-2001 deer seasons began.

Alt noted that, based on the harvest results, the agency accomplished its goal of stabilizing the deer herd's rate of growth.

“Last year, our objective behind the changes implemented for the 2000-01 deer hunting seasons was to stabilize



the rate of growth of the statewide deer herd," Dr. Alt said. "The goal for the 2001-02 seasons will be to reduce the deer herd by about five percent. This reduction in key areas will begin to give the habitat a chance to recover."

Of the total number of deer harvested in 2000-01, bowhunters took

78,522 (38,453 antlered and 40,069 antlerless) compared to 72,071 deer (37,709 antlered and 34,362 antlerless) in 1999-2000. Flintlock hunters harvested 30,405 (1,189 antlered and 29,216 antlerless) compared to 13,949 (967 antlered and 12,982 antlerless) in 1999-2000.

58 bobcats taken

PENNSYLVANIA'S first bobcat season in 30 years (Oct. 14, 2000 - Feb. 24, 2001) brought a harvest of 58 bobcats. Bobcats were taken in 15 of the 20 counties that make up at least part of Furbearer Management Zones 2 or 3, where the bobcat seasons were open. The harvest breakdown by county is: Bradford, 7; Cameron, 1; Centre, 1; Clearfield, 7; Clinton, 5; Elk, 4; Luzerne, 5; Lycoming, 8; McKean, 1; Pike, 1; Potter, 7; Sullivan, 4; Susquehanna, 1; Tioga, 5; and Wyoming, 1.

"That this year's harvest fell short of the harvest objective of 175 illustrates the conservative approach taken by the Game Commission," said Executive Director Vern Ross. "The Board's decision to hold a limited bobcat season was based on conservative, reliable population estimates, and more than 15 years of field research. These seasons also represented a responsible use of a renewable wildlife resource without adversely affecting the bobcat population or its growth."

At a public drawing last September, the Game Commission awarded 290 permits from a pool of nearly 3,300 applicants. Each permit entitled the

holder to take one bobcat. As it turned out, trappers took 45 bobcats, hunters took 13. The harvest sex ratio was 1:1 (29 males and 29 females).

"Permit-holder success rates were a product of the methods employed and the experience of the permit holder, as well as the residence of permit holders," said PGC biologist Dr. Matthew Lovallo. "Hunters and trappers who live in the zones had a 40 percent success rate, while those who live outside the zones had a 10 percent success rate."

From every bobcat taken, Game Commission staff collected basic body measurements; tissue samples; stomachs; blood samples; kidneys; and, from females, reproductive tracts. "Our initial analysis of the reproductive tracts suggests that bobcat pregnancy rates may be higher than we what we had estimated from our population models," Dr. Lovallo said.

Canine teeth will be used to estimate the age composition and distribution of the harvest. This information will be provided to successful hunters and trappers once the analyses are complete.

A survey has been mailed to per-

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

mit recipients who did not report a bobcat, to assess participation and harvest effort. The results from this survey, combined with biological information collected during the season, will be used to determine the number of permits that will be allocated for the 2001-2002 seasons.

"All indicators suggest that bobcat populations continue to expand numerically and geographically throughout the commonwealth," Dr. Lovallo said. He also noted that annual numbers of bobcat roadkills have been increasing at a steady rate since the early 1990s.

"From January through December 2000, there were 119 bobcat roadkills from 31 counties," Dr. Lovallo said. "For comparison, in 1999 there were 84 roadkills from 27 counties; and in

1998, 56 roadkills from 22 counties."

Reported bobcat roadkills for 2000 in the following counties were: Bedford, 3; Blair, 2; Bradford, 5; Cambria, 2; Cameron, 5; Centre, 2; Clearfield, 3; Clinton, 7; Columbia, 1; Dauphin, 3; Elk, 2; Fayette, 1; Fulton, 3; Greene, 1; Huntingdon, 2; Jefferson, 1; Lackawanna, 1; Luzerne, 1; Lycoming, 15; McKean, 8; Monroe, 4; Northampton, 1; Pike, 3; Potter, 12; Schuylkill, 5; Somerset, 3; Sullivan, 1; Tioga, 15; Warren, 1; Wayne, 2; and Wyoming, 4.

Lovallo also noted that the Game Commission's bobcat management program was reviewed and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last year, and will continue to be monitored and refined during future seasons.

Leads sought in golden eagle shooting

THE GAME Commission is seeking information on the illegal shooting of a golden eagle found on the White Ash Land Association property in Cherry Township, Sullivan County, in early March.

The injured bird was first spotted on the ground by a hiker over the weekend of March 10-11, but the Game Commission wasn't contacted until Monday, March 12. Fortunately, another individual located the eagle, which was then retrieved by WCO Vern Perry.

Dr. Inayat Kathio, DVM, of Pittston provided emergency care to the bird, which was then taken to a wildlife rehabilitator.

"We are looking for any information that may lead to the successful prosecution of the person or persons responsible," said Northeast Region

Director Barry Warner. "This was a senseless act. In Pennsylvania, golden eagles are rare migrants. They do not breed in our state, although individuals are sometimes sighted in summer. That someone shot one is an absolute shame."

"I am asking the public for help," Perry said. "If anyone knows or hears anything about this illegal shooting, I encourage them to call our region office (1-877-877-9357). Any information we receive will be held in the strictest confidence."

So far, Dr. Kathio has offered a \$500 reward for the arrest and conviction of those responsible. Additionally, the Game Commission's TIP hotline (1-888-PGC-8001) offers a reward of \$100 for information.

Golden eagles are magnificent predators of remote, mountainous ar-

eas. In North America, they are most common in the western United States, Canada and Alaska. In the Northeast, golden eagles are rare. Although not on the federal endangered species list, they are fully protected by both state and federal laws.

Golden eagles have rich, dark-brown body plumage, with gold-tipped feathers on the head and neck. The

legs are feathered to the toes. Adults resemble immature bald eagles, but the goldens are darker.

Golden eagles are large birds of prey with wingspans exceeding seven feet. Their prey includes rodents, hares, rabbits, birds, reptiles and fish. Goldens crush prey in their sharp talons, and use their large beaks to rip it apart for eating.

PGC website features "Hunters Sharing the Harvest"

THE GAME Commission's website has a new section to promote "Hunters Sharing the Harvest," a program through which hunters are encouraged to donate venison and other wild game for distribution to needy families and food banks. To view the site, go to www.pgc.state.pa.us, click on "Hunting Information" and select "Hunters Sharing the Harvest." The section includes background information about the program; a listing of participating deer processors and butcher shops; and a listing of volunteer area coordinators.

In its 10th year, the non-profit Hunters Sharing the Harvest program is sponsored by Pennsylvanians for Responsible Use of Animals and operates with the cooperation of the Game Commission and state Department of

Agriculture. Other sponsors include the American Crossbow Federation; Pennsylvania Deer Association; Pennsylvania Farm Bureau; Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs; Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; several local chapters of Safari Club International; and the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania. The program also is supported by the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, statewide meat processor trade groups and religious organizations.

"Last year, about 85,000 pounds of venison were donated to Hunters Sharing the Harvest," said Ken Brandt, statewide program coordinator. "That meat was distributed to 200,000 needy Pennsylvanians through food banks, shelters and homeless missions. It's a tremendous service, one many hunt-

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299
Southwest — 877-877-7137
Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107
Northeast — 877-877-9357
Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

ers are proud to participate in.

Last October, the Board of Game Commissioners approved a 3-year, \$15,000 grant for the Hunters Sharing the Harvest program, to help underwrite the processing of deer meat donated by hunters.

Hunters and nonhunters are asked to consider donating a dollar or more

through the Hunters Sharing the Harvest "Give a Buck" program, which covers the cost of processing deer meat donated to feed those in need. For every \$50 raised, a deer can be processed and provide 200 meals.

For information about Hunters Sharing the Harvest, call 717-367-5223.

Join the online peregrine watch

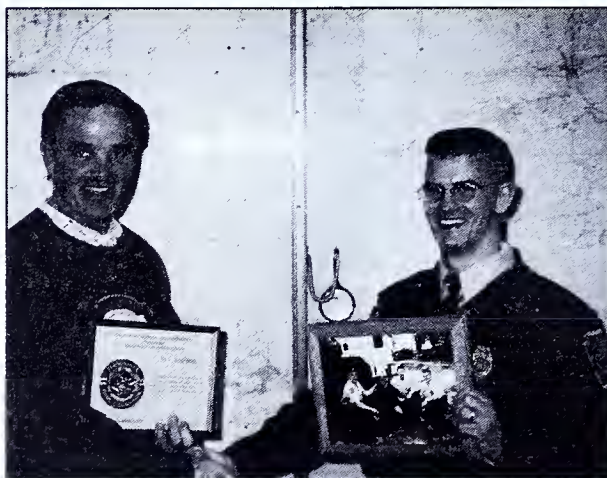
AGAIN this year, a pair of peregrine falcons has started nesting on the Rachel Carson Building in downtown Harrisburg, and people may watch the event online, by logging onto www.state.pa.us or, another site, www.GreenWorks.tv

Last year, the peregrine falcon webpage received more than 34 million hits between March and July, as people from all over the world watched the laying, hatching and fledging of the falcons. The pair produced four fledglings, one of which survived and left the nest, a survival rate similar to that of peregrine falcons and other

birds of prey hatched in the wild.

"This year's coverage has been enhanced with a special online feature called falconwire that will provide daily updates on the birds' activity," DEP Secretary James M. Seif said. "Now, anytime there is news to report, such as a nestling hatching, subscribers will be notified instantly of the latest happenings via e-mail to their computer, pager or cell phone."

In addition to the live video/audio feed, the site also provides background and history of the peregrine falcons, videos, an online photo gallery and links to other sites.



DAVID KEPP, left, was presented with a Game Commission Certificate of Appreciation for coming to the rescue of three bear cubs. A lineman for PPL, Kepp used his bucket truck to retrieve the cubs from a tree that was unsafe for anybody to climb. Their mother had just been killed, and the cubs were too young to survive on their own. WCO MATT GREBECK, Bradford County, made the presentation at a ceremony at the PPL plant in Hazleton.

Another View

By Linda Steiner

What a person's internal desire to hunt is based on hardly matters. And that we go hunting for ourselves is a good thing, but it's not the only thing.

Who are we Hunting For?

"ME, me, me, me!" That's the modern refrain, the song of the new century. Even the "Me Generation" is out-of-date; it implies a group. Today's T-shirts say, "It's All About Me," singular. We do everything just to please ourselves, with no one else considered or influenced.

If you believe that one, let me sell you a bridge.

That we should be going hunting for ourselves has been preached repeatedly.

Bob Steiner



I've even said that, and I meant it, at least in certain contexts. We should go hunting for ourselves, as opposed to going hunting just to please someone else, or because someone says we must or ought to go.

If the motivation to hunt doesn't come from the inside out, as a deep desire to be outdoors and engaged with the hunting tradition and with wildlife, a hunter is only fooling himself. He probably won't stay a hunter for long if he goes on someone else's say-so, or because he wants to be part of the gang.

What a person's internal desire to hunt is based on hardly matters, whether it's a yearning to be in wild places, the challenge of getting game, or even a personal competition to shoot a better buck or bigger turkey. This is what gets us out of bed before dawn and into the rain or snow, and what makes us stay until quitting time. That we go hunting for ourselves is a good thing.

But it's not the only thing. We go hunting for others, too.

I know that part of what keeps me hunting year after year are the ones who go no

A GOBBLER approaching through the brush is a hunting tradition worth keeping alive.

longer, the ones who are gone. I think then mostly of my father-in-law and his love for hunting. As I become middle-aged myself, I view his passing away at 65 as having been taken from us too young. He used to say that he wanted to “walk the top off every mountain in Pennsylvania.” It wasn’t the type of goal that is truly accomplished, but I always thought it a carrot well worth pursuing.

Dad Steiner got out more than most people, considering his trips to the woods meant driving a couple of hours to get far enough from his Pittsburgh area home to reach the mountains. He hunted squirrels during the small game season before he died and was at my house, hunting turkeys, just before he began the hospital stay from which he never returned.

I go hunting because I know my father-in-law isn’t here to do what he so enjoyed. I know he would want me to be hunting still and, if I could send a letter to heaven, he’d be happy to know that I’ve kept up the hunting heritage that he helped introduce me to. I go hunting because that helps keep him more alive to me.

I go hunting, too, for the ones who are still with us, but who can’t hunt any more. In this I think mostly of my own dad. I still hope and wish that he can go hunting with me again, but even if he could, it wouldn’t be like before. My dad, too, loved to walk. Heart problems, diabetes and other ills that come to so many as they get older have limited his getting around.

The last deer hunt we shared was several years ago, when the buck opener dawned at 70-plus degrees. I sat with a light jacket open wide and a T-shirt beneath, at daybreak. At noon I was sweating in the sun as I waited on the edge of the road, with a 5-point I had shot on the ridge above. Dad came along in the car, still bundled in an insulated hunting coverall — his poor circulation chills him. I was glad he was there that day, although he didn’t see any deer from his close-to-the-road stand. He last hunted, and just for a

little while, on a cold fall turkey season day, and was sick the rest of the week for it.

Dad hasn’t gone hunting again and has given his grandchildren his orange coveralls, hunting hat and insulated boots to use. He gave away his bow and arrows and this, I know, hurt him especially. Even after a heart operation, he had dreams of drawing the compound again and going archery hunting, but the muscles said this wasn’t to be.

I don’t know how I’d feel if I knew my body just wouldn’t let me be out in the woods in hunting season anymore, couldn’t take the uneven footing or the cold wind. Yet I know I’ve piled on plenty of memories, and my dad has them, too. What we saw and what we did are things no one can ever take away from us. I hope that to him, although the hunting journey may be over, it was still a trip incomparable, to be cherished and savored.

I hunt because to stop now would be to lessen the memory of my father-in-law and to let down my dad. I hunt for them because I want to fill to the brim my own cup of the hunt before time holds up a hand to my own pouring and says, “Enough.”

I hunt, too, for the ones who don’t hunt, who have no interest in becoming hunters, to whom the possibility that they will hunt ranks somewhere with their being the first man or woman on Mars. I hunt for them because they know me and my being a hunter brings hunting to their lives. My hunting gives me an understanding of the world beyond the backyard, a place where natural processes stand naked of smothering layers of “civilization.”

I return with that education, those revelations, to all those I know. I don’t mean that I go on and on about hunting, or even mention it much, but what I do say about any subject, my take on issues in everyday life, is colored by the time I spent hunting. These nonhunters have through me, I hope, a better feeling for what a hunter is like and what good to the character hunting can be. I’m thinking of many people

here, from my dear sisters-in-law and friends, to those I meet casually. I go hunting for them because I bring back some essence of the hunt within myself, and pass it on to them.

I hunt also for those who may hunt. One gal I know, raised in an urban area and now living in the country, has accompanied hunters and was present when one shot a buck. "I think I might like to do that," she said recently. Although this might-become-a-hunter has never gone hunting with me, I know I've been hunting for her. We've had long talks about what it's like to hunt, what it feels like to kill game, how to see wildlife in the woods, what wildlife needs to live and thrive. Whether she becomes a hunter or not isn't as important as that her curiosity about it and the outdoors has found answers, and that I was able to provide some. She may not hunt, but she'll never be opposed to it. I keep hunting so that can happen.

I hunt for those who are the hunters to

come, those youngsters who will be the next generation to go afield, as I did and so many before me. To stop hunting would be to hurt the memory of those who went before, and to quit would be a betrayal of those who would follow me. I think of my own young relatives and of friends' sons and daughters, including Isaiah Anthony, born just days before this was written, whose dad is an avid flintlock hunter. I know Isaiah's father is already imagining the smaller set of footprints following behind him, his son's smile wreathed in muzzleloader smoke, and his boy's first black powder deer on the ground.

To keep a heritage like that alive, there must be an activity that makes the tradition. Without the continuation of the hunt, without those of us out there hunting now, nothing would exist to pass on. That it is worthwhile keeping the hunt alive goes without saying, and I can see all of you out there nodding agreement. I am hunting for you, too. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

How Long are They?

Put these animals in order according to their body lengths from the smallest to the largest (excluding long tails). Place the letters in the spaces, which is the answer to the question below.

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ (B) Barn Owl | _____ (O) Bald eagle |
| _____ (R) Mallard | _____ (W) Raccoon |
| _____ (I) Red squirrel | _____ (L) Coyote |
| _____ (E) Peregrine falcon | _____ (T) Little brown bat |
| _____ (F) Black bear | |
| _____ (M) Gray squirrel | |

What animal was recently re-introduced into Yellowstone National Park?

answers on p. 64

An oasis in the “concrete jungle,” the White Clay Creek Preserve offers residents from Pennsylvania and Delaware a sanctuary where flora and fauna can be enjoyed.

The Delaware Connection

TO SAVE a stream valley shared by two states seems an impossible dream, especially when the states are in the thickly populated Northeast corridor. But that's exactly what Pennsylvania and Delaware did. On the Pennsylvania side, in southeastern Chester County, the 1,253-acre White Clay Creek Preserve is the only preserve in the Pennsylvania State Park system. In northwestern Delaware the 500-acre preserve is a small portion of the 3,320 acres Delaware calls the White Clay Creek State Park and Preserve.

Back in the 1950s, the E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Company and the Delaware Water Company began buying property in the White Clay Creek Valley. DuPont planned to build a reservoir there, inundating about four square miles. But many citizens, labor groups and politicians banded together to stop the dam.

They preferred to keep the scenic valley — cut into the rolling Piedmont terrain — in its natural state. In 1969 they formed the White Clay Watershed Association, but it took them until the mid-1970s to halt the dam.

Finally, in 1984, DuPont transferred the property to Pennsylvania and Delaware with the provision that it be managed by

both states. Today six citizens from each state, appointed by each state's Secretary of Natural Resources, form a citizens council and meet three or four times a year to discuss the management of the preserve.

I first learned about the preserve from Delaware citizen Dorothy Miller. Miller, a native of Windber, Pennsylvania and a Penn State graduate, is a retired chemist from DuPont. She is also one of the original conservationists who fought to save the valley.

“I got interested in birds when I moved to Newark, and one day when I was out [birding in the White Clay Creek Valley], someone said, ‘Isn't this lovely — it's a shame it will be under water soon.’” That was all Miller needed to hear. As the most visible and outspoken member of the White Clay Watershed Association, she quickly gained notoriety as a persistent advocate for the entire watershed.

Once the preserve was established, she and other members from Pennsylvania and Delaware decided to go after National Wild and Scenic River designation for White Clay Creek and its tributaries. Because the creek is, according to federal park service researchers, “one of only a few relatively intact, unspoiled and ecologically function-

ing river systems" in the corridor between Philadelphia and Newark, Delaware, it was vital to protect as much of it as possible.

On October 24, 2000, 16 years after they started, the bill was signed that gave 191 miles of White Clay Creek that designation. It covers nearly 70,000 acres in both states that drain into the creek and tributaries, and includes 38 historic places on the National Register. Although none of the waterway qualifies as wild under the program, 24 miles rank as scenic and the rest contains special recreational value.

"It was a hands across the border effort," Miller said. "Everything was done by consensus. It's been a nice experience to see cooperation on both sides."

Miller gives special credit to municipal officials in both states and the scientists at Pennsylvania's Stroud Water Research Center. In addition, politicians from both sides of the border and both parties shepherded the proposal through Congress.

The Wild and Scenic River designation means that no dams can be built in the area. Special reviews for any projects involving federal aid or permits are also required. Furthermore, Miller believes that private landowners living along the creek will be proud of the designation, and that pride will inspire some stewardship on their part.

Certainly the valley is well worth protecting, as my husband Bruce and I discovered during two recent visits to the preserve. The first occurred on a bright winter day in early February when we walked several trails on the Pennsylvania side.

Because it is a preserve, not a park, the major emphasis is on conserving its natural resources, so only low intensity use — hiking, bicycling, fishing, cross country skiing and horseback riding (the latter on the gravel roads that encircle the preserve) — is allowed.

The Pennsylvania side of the preserve also celebrates the valley's rich historical heritage, beginning with the native Americans who lived there 12,000 years before the Lenape Chief Kekelappen sold it to William Penn in 1683.

Although frequent flooding has obliterated all surface evidence of Opasiskink, a several acre Native American settlement probably at the confluence of the middle and east branches of White Clay Creek, several stone buildings from European settlement in the 18th century have been preserved.

The Yeatman Mill House, the center of a prosperous, bustling milling and agricultural community during the 18th and 19th century, is probably the oldest house in the area. The London Tract Baptist Meeting House, built in 1729, now contains the



In Marcia's March column, about mountain lions, Gene Odato's e-mail address was incorrect. It should be godato@pa.net.

preserve's Nature Center. Across the street stands the double door Pennsylvania stone farmhouse of Dr. David Eaton, one of the area's earliest settlers.

But our interest that winter day had been in following the snow-covered trail along the middle and east branches of White Clay Creek, which was named for the white clay deposits found there. Those deposits, formed by the weather on the mineral feldspar, are part of the so-called Wissahickon Formation, metamorphic rocks 400 to 600 million years old that settlers used to build the stone structures in the preserve.

At the beginning of the trail the creek is lined by sycamore trees, their mottled white and greenish bark lovely even in winter, but later we stopped to admire a hillside of large yellow poplar, American beech and massive white oak trees. Pileated and red-bellied woodpeckers called, and we saw both a northern cardinal and northern mockingbird as we followed the beautiful winding trail beside the creek. At one point we rounded a bend and surprised seven mallards floating serenely on the water.

Eventually the trail straightened out, when it ran along an old railroad right-of-way that stretched from Coatesville, Pennsylvania to Newark, Delaware and was known locally as the Pomeroy Railroad. A prickly hedge on one side was filled with eastern bluebirds, white-throated sparrows, Carolina chickadees, a Carolina wren and tufted titmice. On the other side we saw what looked like a frozen cattail swamp with a beaver lodge in the middle.

The following May we stood on a wooden platform overlooking the same wetland, with Dorothy Miller and her

birding buddy Andy Urquhart. They told us how delighted they were to have the wetland, as it was a whole new habitat type for them.

While the two eager birders scanned the wetland for resident green herons and Virginia rails, I looked down at the edge of the wetland and noticed a small turtle, prominently marked with orange on its head, nibbling the vegetation. I could hardly believe my luck. It was the first hot, humid day of the year, and a federally endangered bog turtle had emerged from the muck to eat.

Excitedly, I pointed out my find to Bruce, who tried to immortalize the turtle on film, while Urquhart and Miller admitted that they had never seen a bog turtle in the wild. Miller said she had seen one in the Delaware Nature Center where it had been recovering from injuries sustained from being hit by a car.

The wetland harbored other animals that day as well. A male bullfrog emitted a deep-throated *jug-o'-rum*. Two northern water snakes basked on the lodge that the beaver had built right up to the trail. An adult green heron opened its beak and vibrated its throat before walking carefully along the edge of the cattails, probing for food. Eastern kingbirds snapped insects from the air, while red-winged blackbirds and common yellowthroats sang among the wetland plants.

But the birds along the creek in both Delaware and Pennsylvania were even more impressive. According to Miller, the recent checklist for the entire valley includes 198 species. She and Urquhart are especially pleased that it is the only place in Delaware to see cerulean warblers and one of the few places that American redstarts breed. It is also the valley to see six vireo species, four of which breed there. Miller had promised to show me the non-descript gray and white warbling vireo that is partial to streams and sycamore trees. After much scanning with my binoculars, I saw it. I also heard its languid warble for

which it is named. An added bonus was a close-up of the flashier yellow-throated vireo.

In that sycamore grove, we also watched a singing first-year-male orchard oriole, decked out in green and yellow with a signature black throat, a blue-gray gnat-catcher constructing a nest, and a flashy, orange and black Baltimore oriole. Earlier, on the Delaware side, we had added a white-eyed vireo and a red-eyed vireo to our vireo list. We had also spotted a veery skulking in the underbrush.

Veeries, it turns out, are common breeders on both sides of the border, and a recent study by University of Delaware graduate student Kitt Heckscher has found that these spotted-thrushes, which prefer to nest in shrubby, moist woodlands, have found refuge from predators by building their nests in the bases of multiflora rose bushes. Yellow-breasted chats, the largest members of the warbler family, also nest amid the protective thorns.

With Miller and Urquhart, we retraced part of our winter walk along the creek and quickly added eastern wood pewee, yellow-breasted chat and scarlet tanager to our bird list. We watched tree swallows courting on a nearby telephone wire while an American kestrel sat beside them.

We also admired a fine selection of the more than 600 wildflower and wetland plants that have been recorded at the preserve — Greek valerian, Virginia waterleaf, Solomon's seal, sweet cicely, wild ginger, spring beauty, lesser celandine, celandine poppy, poison hemlock, wild geranium, pennycress, Indian strawberry and trout lily.

We especially admired flowering trum-

pet honeysuckle, a high-climbing vine that hung from several trees along the stream. This brilliant native vine, also called coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), is often cultivated for its showy blossoms that bloom, more or less continually, from May until September. Its trumpet-shape, nectar-producing flowers are a sweet magnet for hummingbirds and sphinx moths. So

thick was the vegetation that it blocked views of the stream we had so admired in the winter.

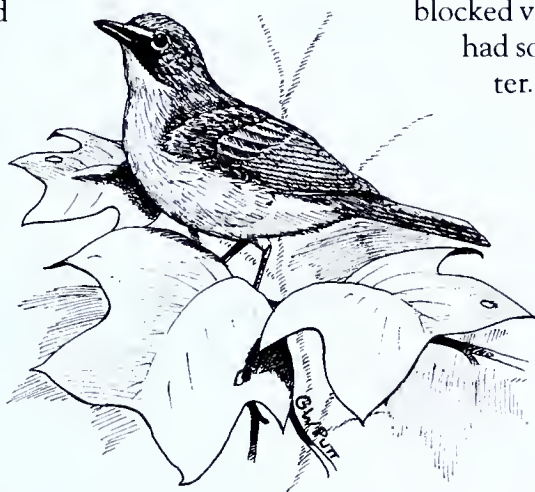
"We like this trail best in fall and winter," Miller told us. "We get a nice sparrow migration in here. For the last couple years we have even found Lincoln's sparrows here."

This was an excellent discovery because, according to McWilliams's and

Brauning's *The Birds of Pennsylvania*, Lincoln's sparrows are uncommon but regular migrants over most of the state. However, their silence during migration makes them difficult to observe. As trimmer song sparrow lookalikes, they also take diligence to identify, especially because they skulk through thickets, weeds and bushes.

Later, I received an inventory of the wildlife and plants on the preserve and was impressed to learn that, so far, 55 grasses, 53 sedges and rushes, 95 trees and shrubs, 20 reptiles, 16 amphibians, 22 fishes, 28 wild mammals (not including the eastern cougar I mentioned in my March column), and 24 ferns and clubmosses have been found there.

Clearly, the idea of conserving an entire ecosystem, regardless of state lines, has given the citizens of Delaware and Pennsylvania a treasure they are eager to protect and expand. □



~ Yellow-Breasted Chat ~

Straight from the Bowstring

By P. J. Reilly

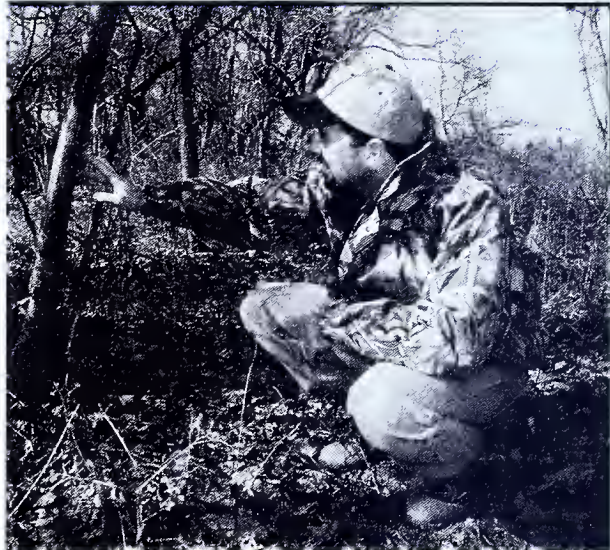
Serious bowhunting demands dedication and commitment, and not just during that short window of opportunity when we can hunt deer.

Become an All-Season Bowhunter

WE CALLED it "The Swamp." The 15-acre, tangled mess of multiflora rose, greenbriers, pin oaks, poplars and other plants growing out of squishy ground that could swallow a man whole without leaving a single trace was the most ungodly piece of real estate in Chester County. And my hunting partners and I were convinced it was a deer haven.

We hunted the overgrown, wooded fencerows that jutted out of The Swamp into neighboring farm fields, and regularly spotted bruiser bucks moving in and out of its mighty tangles. The fencerows provided us with good hideouts from which to view the bucks, but they never put us within bow range. If we wanted to tag one of those heavy-horned bucks, we were going to have to head into The Swamp itself.

The trouble with hunting The Swamp, however, was that it was virtually impenetrable during the late summer. We couldn't get in there to scout before the archery season, to figure out where to place a treestand. One frigid February day a few years ago, however, I decided to go on a mid-winter scouting mission. With a firm layer of ice on the ground and leafless,



NO MATTER if you're trout fishing in April or turkey hunting in May, you should keep an eye out for sign, such as rubs made the previous fall.

drooping vegetation, The Swamp was now like a de-clawed and de-fanged tiger.

While most folks were sitting at home in front of a fire, I was busy preparing for a deer season that was eight months away. Wearing a thick pair of briar-proof pants and a heavy Carhartt jacket, I picked my way through The Swamp on the well-defined deer trails, looking for any deer sign I could find.

Our assumption about The Swamp being a deer haven was correct, as evidenced

by the amount of sign I found. I was most interested in the rubs. They were everywhere. When I found a heavy concentration of rubs on a small, wooded knoll in the center of The Swamp, I knew I had found my stand site. From that knoll, I worked my way back out, hacking a swath through the vegetation with a machete. Over the next eight months I regularly visited The Swamp to keep my trail open, and on the archery season opener my efforts paid off when I bagged a nice 8-point.

The archery deer seasons in Pennsylvania have been running six weeks in the fall and three weeks after Christmas. That's nine weeks out of a 52-week year. Bowhunters who use all 43 of those non-hunting weeks to prepare for the other nine can greatly improve their odds for success. In doing so, they become all-season bowhunters.

Because my hunting buddies and I live in the heavily populated southeast corner of the state, where most hunting is done on private property, and where what's a prime hunting location one season might be a shopping mall by the next, we must be constantly looking for new places to hunt. Most hunters don't think about where they're going to hunt during the coming season until the summer. The year-round bowhunter, however, knows he can never have too many places to hunt, and there's no time during the year when he's not keeping his eyes and ears open for leads to new hunting grounds.

If you hear about a farm or other piece of private property where you might get permission to hunt, the time to act is immediately. It doesn't matter if it's the middle of October and hunting season is in full swing, or if it's the middle of March and the archery season is still seven months away. If you wait to follow up on a

lead, chances are someone else will beat you to it. Make contact with the property owners right away. Get to know them, and give them the opportunity to get to know you.

Just like securing hunting properties, scouting should also be a year-round project. Make it a point to get out as often as you can. Your goal is to learn as much about the deer you're hunting as possible.

My hunting buddies and I typically begin scouting in late January for the following archery deer season. Why start so early? Winter is one of the best times to investigate the habits of the deer in a particular area. With foliage at its thinnest, and the ground often covered with snow, visibility in the woods is at its peak.

Look for well-defined rub lines that were made during the previous fall. This year's rub lines are easily identified because the wood exposed after a buck rubbed off the outer layer of bark will still be fairly white. As rubs age, they tend to turn more and more gray or brown.

Check the trees around those that were rubbed the previous fall for signs of older rubs. Bucks tend to rub trees in the same areas year after year. If you find several years worth of rubs in an area, mentally note that spot as a potential hunting location the following fall. True, the buck that made those rubs might have been shot during the previous season, but when one buck is removed from a particular area, another is



SEARCH your hunting area for signs of heavy deer activity in winter, because cover is at its thinnest.

sure to move in. That buck could very well take up the same path as its predecessor.

Deer are creatures of habit. They use the same trails over and over again to lead them to and from their feeding and bedding areas. With good snow cover on the ground, head out to the woods and look for those trails. You want to find the places where several trails intersect, and where so many deer tracks have crossed each other it's difficult to single out individual tracks. Typically, you'll find these trails in heavy cover, as opposed to the open woods. Find the thickets deer use for protection in winter, and you've found the thickets they hide in all year long.

During the winter, deer tend to congregate in large numbers in areas with the most cover and the best food sources around. Winter "yarding" areas are almost guaranteed to be popular deer haunts during the fall, but deer move into other areas as well when food and cover are more plentiful in October and November. To find those areas, you need to scout during the spring and summer.

There's a 20-acre block of woods behind my friend's house where I shot an 8-point during the last week of the 2000 fall archery season. When the corn was still standing around this woodlot and the leaves were still clinging to their branches through the fall season, this woods was full of deer. After the crops and the leaves came down, and the firearms season came and went, however, you couldn't find a deer in that woodlot during the late archery season.

When we scout that woods in the winter, all we look for are rubs. We don't bother searching for tracks and trails because the deer just aren't there. Our scouting time in that woods is concentrated during the spring and summer, when the crops are growing, the cover is thickening and the deer have moved back in.

You don't have to go out specifically for deer scouting during the off season to become an all-season bowhunter. In the

spring, for example, trout fishing and turkey hunting occupy a great deal of outdoor enthusiasts' time. Year-round bowhunters enjoy those activities, but they keep deer in the backs of their minds at all times.

When they're out trout fishing in April and they come across a heavily used trail running along or across a stream, they mentally mark that spot and make a point to come back and check it for activity as the bow season approaches. Or when they're out turkey hunting in May and find an oak flat on a mountain ridge that looks like a deer magnet, they flag that spot in their mind as well.

Summertime is a great time to drive country roads in the evening and scan cropfields for deer. Take along a spotlight and you can really get a handle on how many and what kind of deer are in your area. For instance, there might be a monster 10-point buck around that you would never see on any of your daytime scouting missions. It's crucial to identify the bucks in your hunting area, because you might not want to take the first 4-point that walks up to you on the archery deer season opener if you know a couple of big boys are around.

One thing the all-season bowhunter does is shoot, shoot, shoot. You can never shoot your bow too much. The more you shoot, the more you hone your skills, and the better off you'll be at filling your tags. With the popularity of archery at an all-time high, finding shooting leagues shouldn't be a problem.

Any kind of shooting, whether it's indoors using bullseye targets or outside "hunting" foam 3-D animals, will help improve your shooting form. As the season draws near, however, stick to the 3-D shoots, because they sharpen your ability to estimate yardage.

Anyone can become an all-season bowhunter. Just make a commitment to keep deer in your mind all year long. Do that and you'll reap the rewards during the few short weeks we can carry a bow in the woods after game. □

The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

A certain amount of chamber pressure is essential; it's excessive pressure that causes problems. Here's the scoop on . . .

Chamber Pressure

I JUST bought this rifle from a fellow at work," an acquaintance explained as he unzipped a cloth gun case." He even threw in two boxes of his handloads that he claims are unbeatable. I've heard his reloads are much better than factory ammo, and he told me they have a lot more velocity than factory cartridges."

That last statement should have tipped me off that I might be shooting loads that could be dangerous. I asked if the fellow had used them and was told, "All the time."

Because it would take only a few minutes to sight in the .30-06, he walked with me to my range just behind my shop. He put up a clean target while I set up the sandbags. A few minutes later I had a live round in the chamber and had the pump nestled deep in the bags.

I can't actually describe what happened when I pulled the trigger, nor can I remember the exact details, but I do remember hearing him ask if I was hurt. All I remember was a bright blue and red flash. My right hand seemed frozen to the rifle's pistol grip. I could see no breaks or bulges, but smoke was coming out of the action like an old time coal-fired railroad engine. The action was frozen tight. My face stung from powder residue, but shooting glasses had saved my eyes. It took several minutes before I was satisfied I wasn't seriously injured, but my right hand was numb for more than an hour. I suggested he take the rifle and ammo back, and I put heavy emphasis on instructing him to have the rifle completely checked by a gunsmith or the factory. I was sure something in the action was bent or warped. The case I had fired was split from end to end and the head was partially separated from the body. Both of us were lucky the rifle didn't come apart.

To satisfy my own curiosity, I asked for several rounds to check the

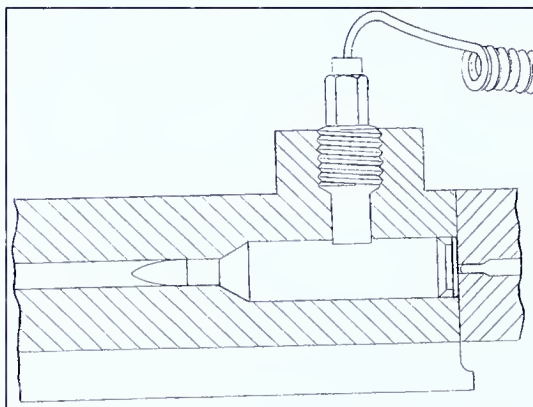
WHEN working up handloads it's wise to start with the manual's lowest suggested load combination and work up. While increasing the amount of powder, keep a sharp eye for excessive pressure sign.

Bob D'Angelo



powder charge. I pulled one of the bullets and dumped the powder on a paper towel. To my disbelief, I found several types of powder. The load data on the box indicated 4895 had been used, but there was no question that one or two other powders had been added. This incident happened more than 30 years ago, and I'm not positive of all the details, but I do recall warning my friend against using the fellow's special "hot" deer loads.

Chamber pressure can be either a handloader's friend or enemy. The handloader who loaded the cartridge I fired gave little thought to the expanding gases known as pressure. Maybe I can say pressure is a necessary evil: It's the force that drives the bullet. Smokeless powder does



A TRANSDUCER is probably the best method for obtaining consistent chamber pressure readings. Note that a hole is drilled in both the chamber and through the cartridge case.

not explode; rather, it burns progressively from the rear of the case to the front. When ignition takes place, gases begin to build pressure inside the cartridge case. The initial pressure that pushes the case against the walls of the chamber is referred to as offset pressure. According to my Model 43 Oehler Personal Ballistic Laboratory (PBL), which is capable of measuring chamber pressure, about 7,000 psi is needed to expand the case against the chamber

walls and the bolt face. With no additional room for case expansion, the only alternative is for the bullet to move into the bore. In an incredibly short time, internal pressure builds as high as 60,000 psi with some types of cartridges.

I know there is a feeling that some cartridges are listed with chamber pressures more than 60,000 psi but, to be on the safe side, handloaders should stay below that figure. Most load combinations shown in current reloading manuals are between 50,000 and 58,000 psi.

I ran a test using a Model 7 Remington chambered for the 7mm-08 Remington cartridge. Using 140-grain factory cartridges, the Model 43 PBL's highest reading was 55,100 psi and the lowest was 52,600, which gave an average peak pressure of 53,700 psi — well below the maximum. True average group muzzle velocity was 2,520 fps. The average standard deviation (SD) was 25 fps. That's holding pretty close.

A second pressure test with a Model LSA55 Ithaca (now discontinued) .22-250 using a 50-grain Sierra bullet in front of 38 grains of IMR 4350 powder, showed an average chamber pressure of 55,600 psi. The highest reading was 57,900 psi and the lowest was 52,500 psi. True group muzzle velocity for five shots was 3,331 fps. The average standard deviation was 41 fps, which is high, but that could have been caused by two shots that fell below 3,300 fps.

There's no cause for alarm with a 42 fps SD, but it does show that particular 5-shot group did not have an acceptable velocity uniformity. It's worth noting that SDs below 30 fps are considered acceptable. This may also indicate that a check of reloading procedures may be in order. Outside neck turning is a good place to start. Another important aspect is to make sure all cases are the same brand, because some bullets seat much tighter than others. This, to some degree, indicates brittle brass. Perhaps the cases are old and have lost their resil-

ience. I'm not implying that doing every step in the book will assure low SDs, but doing these things is a step in the right direction.

Breech pressure has mystified handloaders for years. In the past, most handloaders were aware that excessive chamber pressure could be harmful, and all sorts of methods were tried in attempts to determine when pressures were becoming unsafe. One thing that was not well understood back then was that when certain signs indicated chamber pressure was too high, the critical line had already been passed. For example, when the bolt becomes sticky and extraction difficult — the first abnormal sign usually noted — the pressure is already beyond safe limits. Many handloaders watched for primer distortion and case expansion, but neither is exact and can be misleading. When you come right down to it, the handloader has no indication that shows him when pressures are normal and safe.

It's a mistake to assume pressure limits are within safe limits just because no serious problems have been encountered. Sticking with load combinations published in current reloading manuals will basically eliminate the likelihood of pressure problems, but here is one caution: It's often tempting to increase the maximum load a grain or two. I'm aware that not all reloading manuals show the same powder weights for a particular bullet and powder. One manual may show 55 grains of 4350 as maximum for a 150-grain bullet, and another manual may show 56 grains for the same powder and bullet weight. Which one is correct? Actually, both are, because each company thoroughly tested hundreds of powder charges to establish the maximum load, but they may have used different lots of powder. This is where a handloader can get into trouble.

It's easy to assume that if there is slight

difference in the maximum powder weights with the same powder and bullet there is no reason why an extra grain or two of powder can't be added. I've been told many times that the maximum powder weights shown in reloading manuals are significantly below the maximum chamber pressure a rifle will withstand. I don't believe that, and here's why.

To get velocities equivalent to factory velocities requires near maximum powder charges. When a bullet company is working up a load for a particular bullet weight, it — just like a handloader — is also faced with the problem of holding chamber pressure below 60,000 psi. Reloading manuals caution the handloader to be careful when using suggested maximum powder charges, and most warn against starting with maximum powder charges. While the load combinations shown in the manual, including the suggested maximum powder charges, stay within pressure limits generally accepted as safe in firearms in good condition, it's wise to start with the lowest suggested load combination and work up. While increasing the amount of powder, keep a sharp eye for excessive pressure signs. The sticky or hard to lift bolt handle is one. Flattened primer tops with crater ridges around the firing pin indentation is another. Cracks in the case should alert the handloader that excessive chamber pressure might be the culprit.

Pressure is necessary or the bullet wouldn't leave the barrel, let alone fly at high velocities for hundreds of yards. Pressure is necessary, but it must also be respected. There is no way of knowing how much an extra grain or two of powder above the suggested maximum weight will increase the chamber pressure. Without trying to be dramatic, adding powder above the maximum suggested is like building a bomb under your nose. That's the truth. □

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

The top five states in number of bowhunters in 1997 were Michigan, 385,000; Pennsylvania, 328,193; Wisconsin, 246,000; New York, 170,000; and West Virginia, 121,000.

Hunters in New York took 4,145 turkeys during the fall 2000 season, only about half as many as were taken in 1999. The decline was due to a poor nesting season and the abundance of natural food, which made turkey flocks difficult to pattern.

Hunters in West Virginia took a record 1,315 bears during the 2000 combined archery and firearms seasons — up 32 percent from the 994 taken in 1999 and 22 percent higher than the previous record set in 1998.

In 2000, California lead all states with 289 species included on its state endangered and threatened list.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that during the 1999-2000 waterfowl seasons, hunters in the U.S. spent 14.3 million days in the field and harvested more than 15 million ducks and 3 million geese, which is an average of nine days in the field and 10 ducks and two geese taken per hunter.

There were 193,480 deer taken by hunters in West Virginia during the 2000 seasons, including 88,981 bucks during the traditional firearms season, 64,427 during the antlerless season, 10,259 during the muzzleloader season, and 29,813 during archery season.

Forty-six wild boars were taken in West Virginia during the 2000 firearms and archery seasons — down from the 58 taken in 1999 and the lowest harvest recorded since the late December firearm season was added in 1989.

During 2000, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated there were 2.9 million breeding mallards in Montana and North and South Dakota.

Responding to rumors that Wal-Mart was considering pulling firearms and ammo from its shelves due to pressure from anti-gun forces, store officials have issued a statement denying any such plans, and reassured sportsmen that they intend to remain one of the largest suppliers of hunting, fishing and trapping equipment.

Two new species have been added to the list of birds found in Texas, bringing the nation-leading total to 620 species. A pair of buff-breasted flycatchers was found nesting in Jeff Davis County, and a single blue mockingbird was sighted in Hidalgo County.

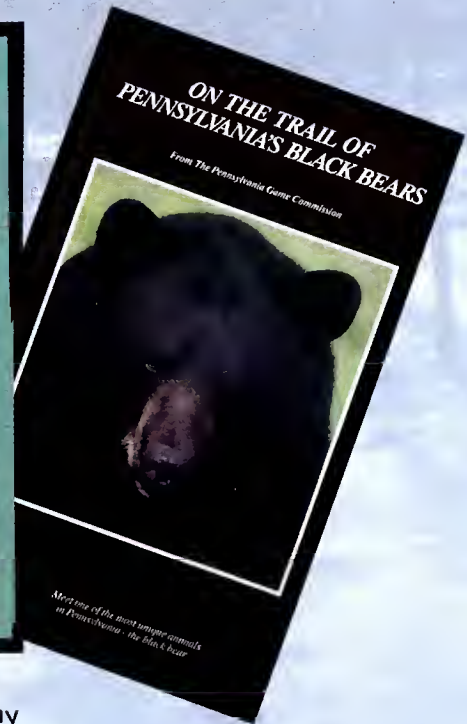
The Centers for Disease Control reports that Lyme disease has increased 25 fold since 1982, and now accounts for 95 percent of all vector-borne illness.

Answer: T, I, M, B, E, R, W, O, L, F
Timber Wolf.

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WORKING TOGETHER FOR WILDLIFE

THE WATCHER, by Marie

Girio Brummett, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. New to Pennsylvania, coyotes are cloaked in mystique. Some people despise them for their predatory habits, others admire them for their intelligence, adaptability and tenacity.



PRINTS are on acid-free, 100 percent rag paper; image is 15 x 22½ inches.

Cost is \$125, plus s&h; for framing add \$97.50. Embroidered, 4-inch patches are \$4.71 each, plus s&h. PA residents add 6% state sales tax.



The Watcher

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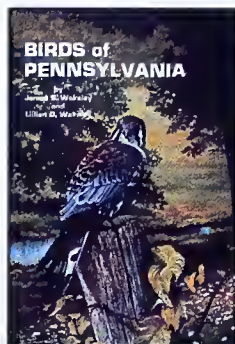
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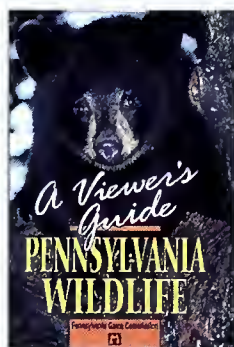


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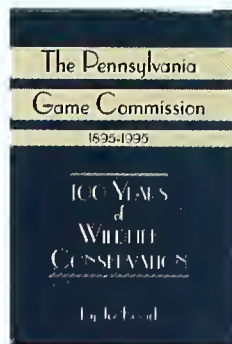
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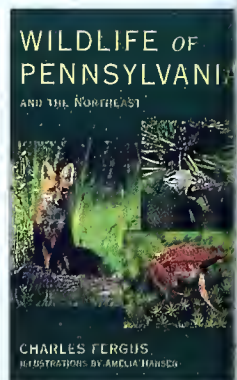
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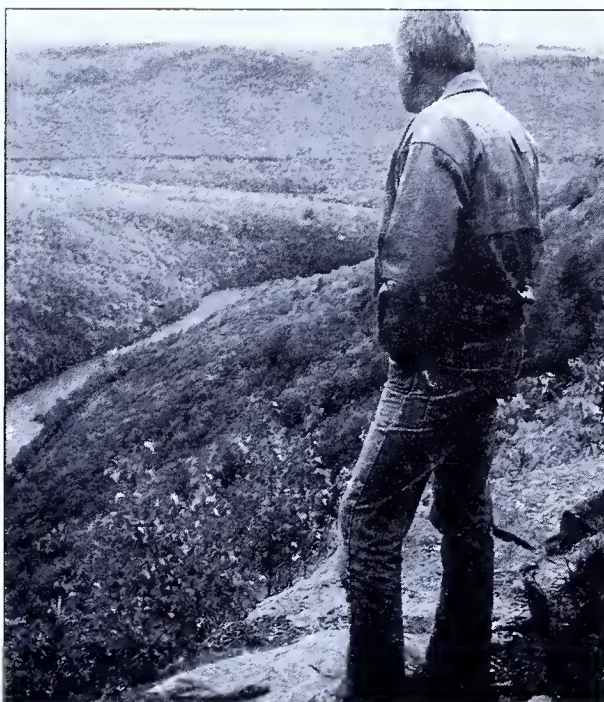
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An outsider takes an inside look at . . .

State Game Lands

By Jim Fitser

Photos by the author



A man with a vision — PGC Executive Director VERN ROSS gazes over the Lehigh River valley from high atop a rock outcropping on SGL 141.

AS AN outdoor writer, I occasionally get a different look at things I normally view as a hunter. When Jerry Feaser, the press secretary for the Game Commission, caught up to me at the Heritage 2000 Festival in Huntingdon he asked if I'd be interested in joining Vern Ross and other Game Commission personnel on a tour of some game lands in the Northeast Region. I jumped at the chance.

I've hunted across the entire state over the years, but I've spent more time in the Northeast than any other region. Perhaps, I thought, I just might

learn something new. I admit, I did have some strong preconceived notions about some of these game lands. I was about to see them from a different perspective.

With itinerary in hand I headed out to meet up with the tour group at SGL 127 in Monroe County. A large contingent of land managers, supervisors, foresters, WCOs and others, was part of the massive statewide tour initiated by the executive director. Time would not permit me to make the entire 3-day Northeast tour, but I was about to get a real education in one full day.

The purpose of the tour, which took many weeks for Executive Director Ross to complete, was to get a firsthand look at just what was going on with

land management. He wanted to see for himself the condition of the game lands, the work that had been done, and what was planned. He was doing something no previous director had attempted: He was getting a firsthand, up-close-and-personal look at the game lands in every one of the commission's six regions.

As a bit of background, most hunters are aware that the Game Commission has 1.4 million acres of game lands. The accompanying chart shows the number in each region, total acres, number of forested, wetland and sharecropped acres, miles of roads, and miles of boundary lines. Think

about what these figures really mean in terms of maintenance, patrolling, surveying and management.

Forest Management

As we toured some of the 25,000 plus acres of SGL 127, known to many as the “Brady Tract,” we were given a lesson in timber cutting operations by PGC district forester Pat Donahue. It doesn’t take long to recognize that an area has been logged, but all the planning that goes into such an operation is largely unseen. The types of trees, their size, the overall composition of the tree species in an area, and how best to get into the area to do the cut while doing the least damage and causing the least disturbance are considered. If there is water on the tract, the problems are compounded. When the study is done and the work begins, it must continue right on through to the planting of new trees and other vegetation in some cases, or the watchful attention to natural regeneration in others.

A brief example of what may be involved in a cutting operation was explained to us. (The same basic events occur across the entire state on many game lands, depending on their makeup.) In 1993 some

345 acres were selectively cut (not a clearcut operation where virtually every mature tree is removed). Herbicide was applied to more than 200 acres to rid the area of vegetation and tree species not used as food by deer or other animals. Desirable species grew back on only 57 of the 200 acres. “So what?” you ask. When you see an area that has been cut and is growing back, do you ever consider just what it is that’s growing?

All too often people tend to think if there’s vegetation, especially new vegetation, it should support deer — lots of deer. Unfortunately, deer won’t eat just anything — unless they are extremely stressed by weather or over population. Like most of us, deer have preferences, and if the most desirable and nutritious foods aren’t there, the deer will move elsewhere.

When foresters examine game lands to make decisions about cutting timber, they must examine things like tree species prevalent, size (how much of an area is pole timber, small saw logs, large saw logs, etc.), what is the best way to improve the area in terms of bringing back desirable food and cover

species for a variety of wildlife, and then seek out timber buyers. Each sale is designed to retain den trees, conifers and other trees that have special value for wildlife. This can sometimes seem like an overwhelming job when one considers there are more than 360,000 acres



LMO ED ZINDELL shows an area on SGL 141 where block cuts have been done. Mountain ash, crabapple, and other trees were planted to produce food for wildlife.

of game lands in just the Northeast Region alone, and more than 83 percent is forested. There are only seven foresters to handle the entire 13-county region.

Among other considerations foresters must make when planning a cut are what will be done with the log staging areas and access roads used by the timber cutters when they have finished their work. These places must be seeded to PGC standards and roads left in good condition. Plants such as clover, a variety of grasses and trefoil are used to provide food not only for deer, but turkeys and other game birds and animals as well. In most cases, when a timber cutting project is finished, it takes a few years for positive results to begin showing up. In fact, depending on actual regeneration rates, it might take as long as 10 years for a deer herd to show a substantial population increase. This means as hunters we can't expect to see the deer herds burgeon overnight. We've got to learn to consider the whole picture.

Non-manageable Land Areas

SGL 119 in Luzerne County was next on the tour. This area held special meaning for me. My father hunted this game lands after WW II, not too many years after the commission purchased the tract. I killed my first deer, a 6-point buck, adjacent to SGL 119 many years ago, and I've often wondered why more wasn't done to improve this tract.

Although there are several food plots on the tract, it's covered mostly by small pine and oak scrub. One of the reasons a whole lot can't be done on much of this area is due to the poor shallow soil.

There are also areas within SGLs 119, 187, 129 and others that are currently off limits to any kind of management because of unusual or rare

plants or habitats. Other areas not suitable to intensive management include places where endangered wildlife or plants are found. For example, the bald eagle nesting sites across much of the state, the Indiana bat, Allegheny wood rat, and massasauga rattlesnake habitats all pose special considerations for PGC land managers.

This is just one more example of a situation the average hunter is not aware of when he wonders why more isn't being done on a particular game lands. In spite of these issues, there are deer, bears, turkeys, grouse and rabbits to be found on most of SGL 119.

Land forms can cause problems for managers. Extensive wetlands, while vital to so many wildlife species, as well as providing natural filtering systems for clean water, require careful and cautious planning before any changes can be made. The Game Commission must also comply with all state and federal regulations pertaining to wetlands before making any changes or management.

Man's destruction of the environment has also contributed to management problems. From the anthracite regions of the northeast to the bituminous mining of the western part of the state, there are thousands of acres of strip-mined lands begging for management. But they require careful research and planning to see just what, if anything, can be done to restore them. In most cases, much can be done, but it takes time, planning and a great deal of effort on the part of the PGC, and some patience (and help) from sportsmen.

Variety is Nice, But . . .

Variety, they say, is the spice of life. Indeed, if you want to see variety, just take a closer look at our game lands. As we moved down into Carbon County's SGL 141 I noticed an entirely different habitat. This area, including much of what is known as Broad Mountain, is mountain laurel and mixed hardwoods. Little of the area is suitable for developing food plots. One area

was planted in corn in 1999, and even before the drought had a chance to finish it off after it sprouted, the deer moved in and wiped it out overnight. Because of the terrain and location it's difficult to get farm equipment into most of this game lands. Not only does this pose problems for the commission, but they can't really get local farmers to sharecrop it either. That means other avenues must be used to try to improve the area for wildlife.

Across much of the state each region poses its own special problems. As indicated to me by each of the region's land managers during my research for this piece, problems range from dealing with river island management in the Southcentral Region, to steep and rocky mountainsides in the Northeast and Northcentral regions. In many areas there is excellent soil, while other locations offer thin, poorly drained soil suited only for pine trees and scrub oak. The Northwest Region offers both vast wetlands to the expansive Allegheny National Forest, with its own inherent problems.

Then there is the Southeast Region — home to burgeoning herds of deer and flocks of resident geese, but ever diminishing places to hunt. Even here the land forms are varied and pose problems, such as the Blue Mountain's huge boulder fields. But because they border agricultural lands

(mostly private) there are plenty of deer — and lately bear — to be found there.

While there is more agricultural land in the Southeast Region than some other parts of the state, lack of land open to public hunting poses a different kind of management problem for the PGC. Contrary to what is happening in some areas, the deer population is growing too rapidly in this region and causing problems for landowners. While PGC personnel have been doing their best to convince people hunting is the best way to control deer, it has been a tough sell. With the growing suburban sprawl, we're lucky to have the game lands we do in the Southeast Region.

Who Does the Work?

When I look out at my little backyard, the concept of trying to manage some 1.4 million acres of land is unfathomable. Having received a great deal of cooperation from the various LMO supervisors across the state who answered my survey, I have a much greater appreciation for the tasks that face them. For most of them, it is a labor of pure, unadulterated love. Granted, they are in the outdoors, leading their work crews who are faced

with solving more than just the problems of how to get the most from the land they manage. To some of us, it seems a wonderful life — working with wildlife, but there are also de-



PGC STAFF and members of the press gather at a site during the SGL Tour 2000.

mands, including some from hunters who think there should be a deer behind every tree, a turkey behind every bush, and a rabbit under every brushpile. These really are the least of the demands on their daily routines. Faced with equipment that often breaks down because it's so old (in many cases 20 to 30 years old), time wasted traveling many miles from the central equipment storage site to work a field or mow a food plot, and — all too often — cleaning up after some thoughtless people who don't have the decency to pick up after themselves.

There are fewer than 220 full time land management employees to take care of the entire 1.4 million acres of game lands across the state. In addition to trying to improve habitat in each of the six regions, there are also hundreds of miles of roads to maintain, parking lots to keep clean, boundary lines to keep cleared to prevent incursion by adjoining landowners, and shooting ranges to keep in shape.

I noticed a PGC employee using an old truck that had been purchased from PennDOT because that department deemed it no longer fit for use. We all hope, with the latest license increase, some of the heavy equipment needs of the land managers will be realized. When there is only one 10-ton dump truck that has to be shared by five land management groups (12 work crews), it becomes all too obvious that the amount of work that can be accomplished is limited. Hauling bulldozers on tilt beds, which also serve to haul pheasant crates in the fall, is a challenge when a crew finally gets a new dozer that is bigger than the old one. The single most repeated wish from all regions was for more equipment and personnel.

There are some limited funds available to hire temporary help, but last

year fewer than 30 temporary employees were hired for limited hours (due to budget constraints). While welcomed by the regular employees, these people could be used full-time year-round in every region to help accomplish more for the state's wildlife and hunters.

Those Nagging Problems

All too often we take things for granted. Because we pay for a hunting license, we have the privilege of hunting on these 1.4 million acres of game lands. We also have 53 shooting ranges across the state. Unfortunately, there are some people who abuse this gift that hunters and shooters in other states would love to have. The next time you visit a PGC range, consider the following: Last year there were nearly 11,000 man-hours spent maintaining these ranges. This resulted in a total of \$226,509 in salaries, benefits and equipment costs. And this does not include the material costs. Much of these costs could be reduced if range users would stop shooting at the wooden target frames, and makeshift targets such as bottles and cans.

Another problem that plagues land managers is illegal ATV use. While certainly fun when used properly and sometimes necessary (for disabled hunters to get around), ATVs can tear up the land and streambeds faster than nature and the land management crews can repair them.

In addition to ATVs, horseback riding has become more of a problem in recent years, mostly in the Southeast and Northwest regions. Riders are taking liberties by riding across newly planted fields and food plots as well as through the woods. Personal observations have shown that many of these people live near the game lands on property that is heavily posted against hunting. They want it both ways — their own private land and use of the hunters' land as well.

A few years ago while woodchuck hunting on a local game lands, I was verbally attacked by a horseback rider who told me

STATISTICS ON STATE GAME LANDS

REGION:	NW	NC	NE	SW	SC	SE
SGL Tracts	77	59	64	54	66	58
Acres	184,890	314,602	364,689	171,053	203,396	153,831
Forest Acres	160,568	304,178	339,620	162,060	193,744	143,378
Wetland Acres	15,043	3,295	17,919	1,270	1,070	1,913
Food Plot Acres	4,693	2,965	3,384	3,272	3,775	3,108
Miles of Roads	515	581	570	451	390	268
Shooting Ranges	10	4	11	18	2	8
Employees	45	35	39	28	30	37

I was a threat to him, and that I shouldn't be hunting where people ride their horses. I politely asked where his hunting license was, but without answering he rode off through a field of knee high corn. At least the horse wasn't rude.

Hope and a Vision for the Future

I asked the region land management supervisors if they get any volunteer help from sportsmen's clubs or other organizations with an interest in the outdoors. While I saw firsthand the work done by the Carbon County Sportsmen on SGL 141, with their block cuts and planting of various species of trees to benefit deer, turkeys and other wildlife, there are many groups across the state that have helped with habitat improvement projects on state game lands. While they certainly deserve much credit, most do it out of a sense of wanting to give something back. They have helped cut brush, create food plots, planted trees, put up nesting boxes for ducks and bluebirds, cleaned up litter, rebuilt target

ranges and so much more.

In a report to the Game Commissioners, Vern Ross noted that \$9 million has been pledged to improve habitat on state game lands. He also had high praise for the land managers and their Food & Cover Corp crews who do so much with so little, and often without being appreciated. With priorities set, the whole process will be put on a fast track to begin accomplishing the commission's goals for habitat improvement.

Theirs is a vision for the future, and as with the man who initiated the tours of the state game lands last year (and again this year), Executive Director Vern Ross, there is a deep-seated commitment to making the best even better. There is always room for improvement, and with leaders and workers who know and understand the ways of nature, game lands will be preserved for future generations of wildlife and hunters. □

COVER PAINTING BY STEPHEN LEED

THE GAME COMMISSION is pleased to offer "Country Mist — Eastern Bluebirds" featured on this month's cover. Limited to 950 signed and numbered prints, image is about 15x22 1/2 inches; prints are \$125, plus \$10.95 s&h. Framed prints cost an additional \$97.50, plus \$14.95 s&h. PA residents must add 6 percent sales tax. Make checks payable to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Order from the PA Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.

Even the Last Day

By Joe Parry

There's always a giant buck. Every woodland, every hollow, every multiflora rose thicket, and every man's deepest dream harbors at least one . . .

THIS OLD hunter's heart, dreams and home are no different from anywhere else where the whitetail casts shadows during the hunts of November. But forget the fantasy and the dreams of a man who has been hunting for nearly 50 years and listen to the true story of Willow.

I was taking out the trash one morning early last autumn when I happened to look across the meadow and down toward an old hemlock that has stood for more than a century. About a dozen does were grazing in the clearing, so I set down the trash bags and watched, wondering what they were feeding on. As I stooped to pick up the bags, I noticed three more deer emerge, ghost-like, from beyond the old tree. All were bucks with big racks, but two, even at a distance, were eye-poppers. Each carried a rack as high and white as a hunter could imagine. My aging knees nearly buckled, and I hoped I'd see either of these two with my .444 Marlin in my hands. I had the little 444P shooting tight 3-shot clusters, like three-leaf clovers, two inches high at 100 yards. I bought the lever action for its accuracy, but more so for its carrying and handling qualities.

I ran into my office — a converted sunporch — grabbed my 7x50 binoculars and went back out to get a better look. I hit the fast-focus adjustment as

I scanned the area for the two bigger bucks, and when the larger of the two, soon to be referred to as "Willow" came into focus, I'll readily admit to watering eyes and a heart that sounded like a drumming grouse. The tines were as white as driven snow and as high as any record whitetail I'd ever seen. Six points per side; I figured he'd score at least 170 B&C points.

What I figured to be the beta buck was hastened away by Ol' Willow, but before he disappeared I got a good look at his rack, too. Although not as high or white as Willow's, his rack was impressive, bigger than I had originally thought and definitely bigger than any I had taken, even my 25-inch mule deer. I vowed I would be more than happy with him when buck season opened.

Not wanting this once-in-a-lifetime sighting to be my own, I ran into the house and yelled for my son. "Justin. Get down here and see two bucks that dreams are made of. You ain't gonna believe this, Partner, hurry before they run into the sumac thicket."

My son stumbled down the three front steps leading outside from my writing study. I handed him the glasses and pointed to where the three bucks were now sparring rather playfully. Spotting the smallest of the three first, he said, "handsome little 6-point, huh, Pop?" I told him to look at the two closer to the sumac and then watched as he maneuvered the binoculars



and then stopped as though it hit a brick wall.

"Oh m'gosh, Pop. They're unbelievable. I've never seen anything like them."

I told him to focus on the base of the largest and check out the mass.

"Geez, I see what ya mean. What do you figure around the bases?"

"Hard to tell, Partner. At this distance I'd be guessing, but from the many antlers I've scored, I'd figure those bases are about eight inches around. That heavy 6-point looks like the one you took several years ago, doesn't he?"

Since then Justin had replaced his deer rifle with guitars and related sound equipment. He's a singer now, and no longer shares the autumn and winter hunts with his dad. Saddest day of a man's hunting life, losing a hunting companion to a career. Deep down he knew that I missed him terribly as a hunting partner.

"Yeah, sorta, Pop. Ya gonna be huntin' deer this November?"

"Yes, Partner, one buck." I pointed at the 12-point, Willow.

Justin looked at me, a sleepy smile wrinkling his handsome face, and while walking away said softly, "Sure, Pop, but ya won't kill 'im."



My jaw just dropped and I, in a very rare moment in my life, was lost for a suitable response.

After Justin was out of hearing range and the deer melted back into the thicker, I said out loud, "I darn will if I see him." In my mind I didn't know how important the killing aspect was. All I knew for certain was that I wanted the opportunity.

On opening day I situated myself on a point on the mountain where deer must cross if they are to escape hunting pressure. Because of the unusually mild weather, I was perspiring in just a light jacket and an orange small game vest. I settled in and chambered a 240-grain cartridge, and the woods were so quiet I could almost hear my hair growing. I was in a state of total peace when the sun peeped over Hickory Ridge. Two does casually poked through the area, and with every hair in place, they looked artificial in such a harsh environment. Not long after, a hunter working the mountainside in conjunction with a drive came near where I sat. "Big buck just came through here, did you see him?"

"Nope, just you putting on a drive on opening morning," I replied.

Somewhat embarrassed, I think, he walked into the next hollow.

By 11 o'clock I'd seen two small bucks, but not Willow or Beta. And as it turned out, during the first week I hunted hard every day but one, but never spotted either buck. One day a neighbor asked, "Hey, Parry, seen that big ol' buck you was telling me about last month?"

"Nope, not yet, Glenn."

"Figured you'd hunt him down, did ya?"

"Glenn, you've been huntin' long enough to know big bucks don't get that way by being stupid enough to let me or anyone else catch 'em with their britches down."

"How about me and the boys try pushing him to ya? Sure would like to just see him, Joe."

I couldn't blame Glenn for wanting to see that magnificent whitetail, but in all

honesty, I thought I knew where he was holed up.

On the last day I decided to take my deceased father's old Model 99 .300 Savage. It had been given to Justin by his "Pap-Pap," and because he gave up deer hunting, he asked that I "baptize" it, then retire it forever. "How about it, Pop? Think ya could do that on the last day? I was foolin' with it a couple weeks ago, and the ol' Savage is right on the money at 100 yards."

"You sure?"

"Pop, would I lie to you?"

"Probably in fun, just to make me look bad. But hey, ol' Pop here is a legend in his own time, right?" Justin laughed, as did my wife, Linda, and daughter, Erika, as they overheard us talking.

"Sure, Pop, we all know how legendary you are, but are you hunter enough to get one of those big bucks on the last day?"

"Yes I am," I said defensively. "I certainly am."

"Then go for it, Pop, and keep in mind I'd be satisfied with any buck as long as you do it with Pap-Pap's ol' Savage."

Well, I went for it, but other than a small buck that ran over a ridgetop, there were no opportunities. About 4 p.m. I headed for the barn, tired from hunting nearly every day of the season in which I had several chances to kill a buck, but neither Alpha nor Beta. As I walked the dirt road toward home, a gut feeling caused me to glance over into the hollow between our road and the paved highway. I spotted a whitish glow moving ever so slightly in the crabapple thicket. It was Willow; he had made it through his fifth rutting moon. I slowed my pace ever so cautiously, glanced at him through my peripheral vision and

said to no one in particular, "You are one magnificent animal, Willow ol' boy. Go in peace this year, but remember, I'll be back."

"So, Pop, where's the venison? No chances today, huh?" Justin greeted me at the door.

"Yeah, Justin, one small buck. I was just too blasted tired to drag it in."

"How about those two huge bucks, the ones that had you sleepless for weeks? Where did they get to? Heard of anyone killing them?"

"No, Son, they're alive and well. Just caught a glimpse of the 12-point, just below the barn. Ol' rascal never twitched an ear. I suspect the 8-point is up on the ridge somewhere. Don't know if I would have shot either of those bucks, though, even if I had a chance."

"Maybe next year, Pop," Justin said as he pussyfooted into the kitchen on slippered feet, snickering under his breath.

"What's so funny, big shot who hung up his huntin' guns?"

"You say you wouldn't have shot one even if you had had the chance, right?"

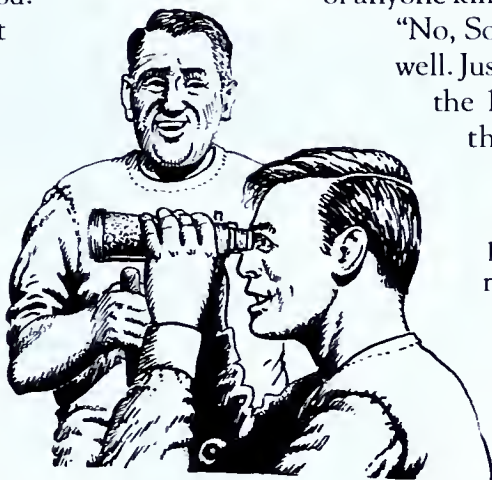
"That's about it, Partner, why?"

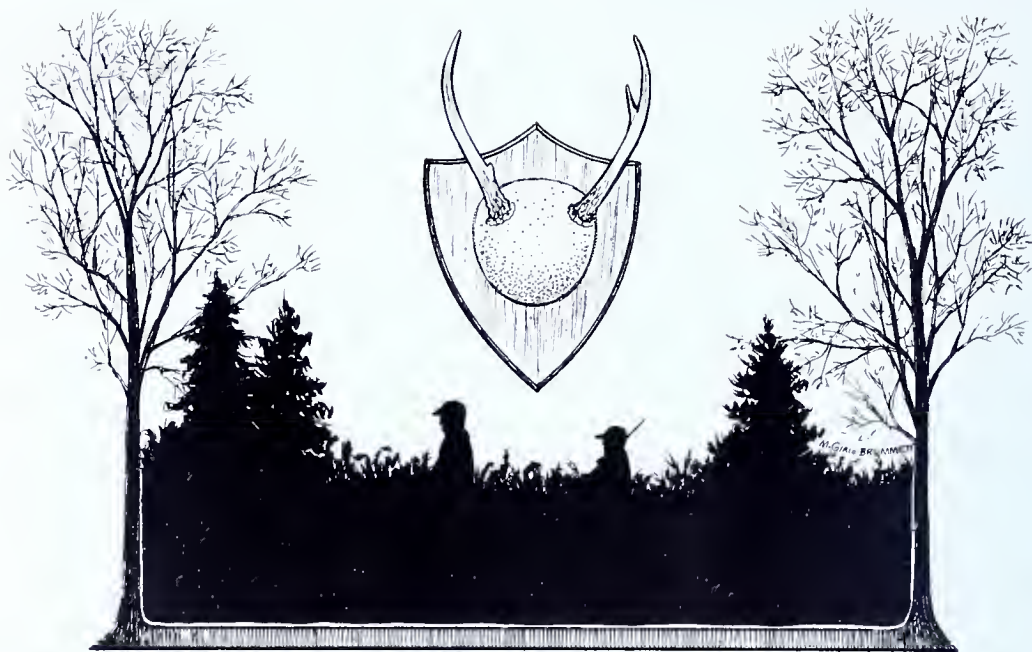
"Then tell me this. Why were you drooling like an angry bull every evening after coming home without seeing them?"

"Doggone hot out there this season, Justin, what's so hard to understand about that?"

"You're a neat, old man, Pop, even if you do tell the occasional white fib. Good night."

"Good night, Son, I love ya, ya know?" □





More Than Antlers

By Steve Sorensen

AS SATISFYING to me as a “wall-hanger” buck would be, I’ve had to be content with more modest personal trophies. After 35 years of hunting I’ve taken my share of deer and had some memorable hunts, but I’ve never taken a big buck.

While Pennsylvania is known for its high deer population, many hunters believe that finding a trophy buck here is nearly impossible. Few mature bucks are available, primarily because the great majority of bucks harvested are one-and-a-half years old. So, I’ve decided in my own mind what a trophy is — and what it ought to be — even if many mature bucks were available.

The opportunity to hunt is priceless and a trophy is a bonus. The rewards from hunting are many, and for me they are unmatched in any other activity. Every hunt provides the opportunity to test myself, not against other hunters, but with my own skills acquired over the years. The trophy can be improperly emphasized, making the hunt a competition, which can affect the attitude of the hunter and can be unhealthy for the resource as well. Although hunting is indeed a competition, it is in the greater scheme, not a rivalry between hunters, but a contest between prey and predator. Usually the prey is the winner, otherwise it would not be hunting.

So what is a trophy? For me, a trophy is measured less by the size of the antlers

than by the subjective nature of the circumstances and the methods that brought it to bag. I've killed many bucks with small antlers, and a few have had no antlers at all; a doe can be a true trophy, too. Hunters have been conditioned to think that the male of the species presents a greater challenge. Whether that is true or not is debatable. Is it because in most populations antlerless deer are much more plentiful?

I remember one doe that was a trophy for several reasons. In 1990, my 11-year-old daughter accompanied me one day during doe season.

I had already filled my buck tag, so the meat was not as important as the enjoyment of the hunt and the opportunity to be with Jill. We climbed the hill at dawn, knowing that the cold weather might diminish her enthusiasm. I planned for three short stands, perhaps an hour at each, figuring that staying in one place too long might dampen Jill's enthusiasm.

At the first spot nothing happened, and on the way to the second Jill complained of cold feet. As luck would have it, though, soon after arriving at the second stand three does came by and I was able to drop the largest one at 125 yards. What made this deer a trophy? Yes, my daughter was with me, but it was more than that. I had made a difficult shot, and I was able to teach Jill a valuable lesson in looking for sign of a hit and recovering a deer. The memory makes it a trophy.

There was a doe one year that fell to a shot at an honest 300 yards. The day was 18 degrees below zero and I was in an area I had never hunted before. I wanted to succeed by studying a topographic

map of the area, and then using my skills to find the most productive area. The doe I bagged that day at such a long distance, and as a result of interpreting the topo map, is as much a trophy as any big-racked buck would be.

My first buck will always be a trophy to me. The antlers dropped off that 5-point as he dropped to a neck shot. I couldn't find one half of the rack until a school chum came by and found it while I was field-dressing the deer.

My first buck with a bow was even more of a trophy, being the first deer I ever called in. Only a 4-point, but easily the heaviest deer I've ever taken, he succumbed to a 125-grain Muzzy broadhead while lip-curling at seven yards.

Since taking up bowhunting, I've enjoyed hunting more than ever. And my enjoyment of archery hunting made one buck taken in rifle season a more treasured memory.

During archery season I called in the small 6-point but passed on him to wait for something bigger. I let him walk four more times during archery season, and then took him in his bed while still-hunting late in the rifle season. Only a few times have I shot a deer while still-hunting. Never before had I shot a buck that I had become acquainted with, and never before had I shot a buck in his bed. Those circumstances made that little buck something special.

I'm still looking for that



wall-hanger buck, and I expect to bring him home someday. The likelihood of that happening increases dramatically if management practices here in Pennsylvania change to produce a better buck:doe ratio, and a deer population with an older age class. I may finally get a real granddaddy, but it still may not be my long-awaited trophy. Who knows? It may even rank in the

Boone & Crockett or Pope & Young record books. But if it turns out to be the result of sheer luck rather than a well-laid plan, then it won't necessarily rank high in the S. J. Sorensen book. It may go on the wall as an object of beauty and as a fine specimen of a loved and appreciated species, but it will not hang there as a trophy, not when compared to the many others — for it takes more than antlers to make a trophy. □

***Fun Games* — By Connie Mertz**

Beware

Identify these plants then copy the misplaced capital letters in the order they appear.

PeopLe avoid mE. I'm probably the most disliked and most fAmiliar poisonous shrub in PennsylvAnia. No wondEr. I inflict quite an irritating raSh from my watery sap referred tO as urushiOl. All parts of me are poisonous From my rooTs to my HaiRy stEmS and lEaves. I'm cLEverly disguisEd by leaf colorATions of eiTher rich greEn, criMson red or pale yellow. I can grow as a small plant, shruB or trailing vinE.

I am _____

One way to help identify me: _____
_____, _____.

People claim that I'm poisonous, but I'm harmless to touch. I am a common shrub that groWs deep red clusters of tiny berries that are actually edible. In fact, Native American lemonade can be made from them. I Have the nIckname "staghorn" because my branches feel fuzzy — somewhaT likE a buck in velvet. My Bark and lEaves are Rich in tannin, and I'm consideRed medicInal. HowEver, I do have a poiSoNOus varieTy that grows in swampy aReas or wEtlanDs.

I am the _____

One way to identify my poisonous variety is to watch for _____
_____, _____.

answer on p. 64

Modern-Day Elk Hunt Approved

By Rawland D. Cogan
PGC Wildlife Biologist

PENNSYLVANIA'S native elk were exterminated by 1877. In 1913 the Game Commission transported elk into the Keystone State to reestablish a huntable elk population. Elk were hunted from 1923-1931. Except that numbers were low, not much is known about elk since that last hunt until the early 1970s, when they attracted the attention of wildlife researchers. Since 1974, the elk population has increased from a low of 38 up to around 700 today. Habitat enhancement, land acquisition, elk deterrent fencing and increased public support have attributed to the population increase. As the population grew so did the elk range, expanding from 225mi² to approximately 835mi² today.

During 1998, 1999 and 2000 approximately 70 elk were trapped and transferred to western Clinton County to expedite range expansion. Currently, elk can be found in portions of Elk, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton and Potter counties.

In 1996, the PGC developed a management plan for elk. The elk management goal as stated in the plan is:

To recognize elk as a valuable wildlife resource, and to perpetuate a free-roaming elk population within suitable habitat for viewing and unique hunting opportunities at levels compatible with habitat capacities that affected landowners will accept.

The plan also states that hunting is the management tool of choice, should elk population control be deemed necessary.

Why Hunt Elk?

We have studied elk intensively since 1982, and have learned a great deal about population dynamics, re-

Hal Korber



productive rates, calf survival, home range and movements, and habitat preference. Before proposing any sort of elk hunt, a solid scientific database was necessary. Through almost 20 years of research, we now have the information needed to recommend and conduct a limited elk hunt.

Based on aerial and ground surveys, sex and age composition of the herd, reproduction estimates and calf survival, we believe the increasing population trend will continue. After aerial surveys this past January, we estimated the herd to number 622 animals: 311 adult cows, 135 calves, 106 adult bulls, 56 spike bulls, and 14 sex and age unknown. Following this year's calving season, we believe the herd could reach 700. If the herd's growth is not managed, habitat destruction, lower reproduction, decreased calf survival, increased crop depredation, additional vehicle collisions, and competition for food and cover between elk and other wildlife are all likely to occur.

In general, animals and their habitat will be in poorer condition if population management is not implemented. We know the negative effects high deer numbers have on forest ecology: Habitat destruction occurs, fewer fawns are born, fawn survival is low

(especially in northern Pennsylvania) and crop depredation is evident. We do not want to repeat history. Elk numbers must be controlled to balance the biological needs of elk and other wildlife with the needs of the residents within the elk range.

Hunts in other states have shown that just being hunted makes elk more wary of humans, which in itself could reduce elk related problems.

Pennsylvania's elk are old compared to those in hunted herds. We have bulls that cannot breed because they are too old to compete with younger bulls. In fact, during the mild winter of 1997-98 ("El Nino") we had a bull die of old age — estimated to be 18 years old. The same is true for cows. We have a radio-collared cow that has been part of our study since 1984. She will turn 22 this month, and has not had a calf since she was 13.

Hunting over a period of years will reduce the number of older animals, and those that remain will likely be more reproductively successful. Through a limited hunt we can, over a period of years, manage for a younger, more productive elk herd. I am not suggesting that hunters (or anyone else) will be able to determine the age of an elk, but that hunting over time will result in a younger herd.

In Pennsylvania, the average annual rate of increase has been 12-16 percent.

Hal Korber



The maximum annual rate of increase for an elk population is estimated to be 20 percent. The reproductive potential is lower for elk than for deer because elk have a single calf most often and most cows do not breed until they are more than two years old, giving birth at three years of age. Through hunting, the annual rate of increase could possibly reach 20 percent.

To ensure long-term growth of the herd, we need to balance the age structure to include mature as well as young bulls and cows. Managing for mature bulls will increase reproductive success. Through hunting we will be better able to manage the age structure of this herd. We propose to manage for large mature bulls that will ensure the best reproduction, as well as outstanding viewing and hunting opportunities. Currently, the branched-antlered bull:cow ratio is estimated at 35:100. Many western states manage for fewer bulls, some as low as 12-15 per 100 cows. We propose to manage for a minimum of 25 bulls per 100 cows, a ratio that will ensure there will be enough adult bulls for breeding.

Time of Hunt

November 12-17, 2001, has been scheduled for this year's hunt. Longer hunts provide more time afield for hunters, which also increases hunter success. Weather often plays an important role in hunter success. During inclement weather, hunter success is often low. With a 6-day season, hunters can take their time, make wise decisions and enjoy the hunt. Two extensions have been provided for, if needed. The extensions are scheduled for December 26-31, 2001 and January 2-7, 2002.

Elk Management Areas

Fourteen elk management areas have been established on the 835mi² elk range. Management areas were determined by sex and number of elk in each area, elk movements, reported conflicts and definitive boundaries. A 15th area has been estab-

lished, which is just everywhere outside of the elk range. For each management area, a number of bull (antlered) and cow (antlerless) licenses will be determined, as a way to direct hunters into areas where elk need to be taken. Some areas may be closed to elk hunting, depending upon the harvest goal.

Area 15 contains that area outside of the elk range. Occasionally elk disperse outside the desired elk range and cause conflicts with humans. Management Area 15 will allow us to target elk outside of the elk range where conflicts are occurring.

Benezette Viewing Area Closed

One area near Benezette and the elk viewing area will be closed to elk hunting. This area was closed because elk near the viewing area have been artificially fed and are in close proximity to people. Elk near this area may appear tame, but they are not; they are habituated to humans. These animals are accustomed to living near humans and have little fear of man. Therefore, to allow elk hunting at this time in these areas would not be in the best interest of hunters, hunting or elk.

Elk Hunting in the Eastern US

This year, after 70 years of closed seasons, elk hunting will return to Pennsylvania. In the eastern United States, elk hunting is also now offered in Arkansas, Michigan and Minnesota; elk have been reestablished in Wisconsin, Kentucky (which is planning its first modern-day elk hunt this fall), North Carolina and Tennessee; and Missouri, New York and West Virginia are contemplating elk reintroduction projects.

That elk can once again be found in so many eastern states is a wildlife management success story we can be proud of. □

Spanning the Generations

By Roland A. Turley
Deputy WCO (Retired)



ENOCH WALTER TURLEY (WALT) was commissioned as a game protector in 1919. He was made a refuge keeper in 1934 and retired in 1941.

IN 1895 the Pennsylvania Game Commission was created by the legislature and came into being under Dr. Kalbfus. Twenty-four years later, 1919, Enoch Walter Turley was commissioned as a game warden. He was handed a game law book, a Colt 38-caliber Police Positive revolver, and instructed to “go out and enforce the game law.” Walt Turley was my grandfather, and he enforced that law for 22 years, until his retirement at 65 in 1941.

Grampa Turley lived in Weedville and had a territory that included Elk County and portions of Clearfield and

Cameron counties. I was told that his first big arrest came at Karthaus, when he arrested a group of violators that had sworn to get him if he tried to come after them. They did not get him; he got them.

Grampa moved to Ridgway and continued as the game warden until 1934, when he was assigned as the game refuge keeper at Game Refuge 34 (now SGL 34) in Elk, Clearfield and Cameron counties. In that



ROLAND F. TURLEY, oldest son of E.W. TURLEY, worked for the Game Commission as a laborer from 1935-1937. He was accepted in the second class at the Ross Leffler School of Conservation in 1937, and he worked as a game protector and land manager in Blair County until he retired in 1965.

The author, right, ROLAND A. TURLEY, and grandson of ENOCH WALTER TURLEY, was commissioned as a deputy game protector in 1966 and served until 1987. His son, Michael, below, was commissioned as deputy WCO in 2000.



position he performed many experiments in wildlife plantings, shelters and food crops. He worked in that role until his retirement at the end of 1941.

In 1936 Walt Turley's son (and my uncle), Roland Francis Turley, entered the second class at the Ross Leffler School at Brockway. He graduated in 1937 and was assigned to Blair County as a game protector. His jurisdiction included the entire county at that time, and Uncle Roll served as a game protector until around 1950 when he became the land manager for Blair County and surrounding areas. Uncle Roll gave 32 years of service to the PGC and the sportsmen of Pennsylvania.

In 1938, with money from the newly enacted Pittman-Robertson Act, the Game Commission began research programs for the improvement of wildlife habitat, and Harry A. Turley, my father, was hired as a member of a team of researchers to study vegetation in Pennsylvania, and to determine what wildlife food needs were. Dad was in that position until World War II caused the team to disband for the dura-

tion of the war. Dad's service was three years with the PGC:

In 1966 I received my commission as a deputy and worked with District Game Protector Paul Ranck in Lycoming County. I was a teacher at the Williamsport Technical Institute at the time. I later moved to McKean County, then to Erie County, and finally to Clearfield County, where I was assigned the same territory my grandfather had in the 1930s. I finally retired my commission in 1987, having given 21 years of services to the PGC. At that point the total service by the Turley family with the PGC was 78 years over three generations.

On Saturday, August 26, 2000, at the PGC Northwest Region Office, I was privileged and proud to hand the fourth generation Turley, my son, Michael Roland Turley, his commission and badge as a deputy wildlife conservation officer. Mike says he hopes to give enough years of service to sportsmen to make a total of 100 years with the PGC by the Turley family. And yet there is another Turley boy, Mike's 5-year-old son, Nathan. Maybe there will be a fifth generation Turley to carry on the tradition. □



Get With the “In” Crowd

Here are some tips for getting beyond those No Hunting signs.

By Mark Demko

A NICE BUCK makes its way through the thicket, following a pair of does that has just crossed the overgrown logging road. Abruptly, he stops to smell the air. Something doesn't seem right, but it's too late as the well-placed arrow finds its mark. After a 50-yard run, the big 8-point piles up, and before long the hunter climbs down to tag his trophy.

Scenes like this take place across the commonwealth each fall as thousands of hunters score on deer during the archery and gun seasons. For a great majority, though, these deer

come from property other than state game lands, state forest, national forest or other public tracts.

According to deer harvest report cards received by the Game Commission, around 70 percent of the deer harvested in the state is taken on private property. The reasons a person decides to hunt on private land are many. Perhaps deer numbers aren't what they once were on public land, work and family commitments require having a spot within a few minutes of home or, quite frankly, hunting pressure on public land is just too heavy in some places.

But gaining access to private land is be-

coming increasingly difficult. This is due to many factors, one of which is that some people simply don't allow hunting. Another is that the amount of open spaces is shrinking due to development. Fortunately, whether a person seeks permission to hunt with a bow or firearm, there are still plenty of people that will allow hunting if one knows when and how to look.

Land is posted for many reasons, but this doesn't mean every piece of property becomes an impenetrable fortress. Some owners simply post to make sure their land is not overrun with people. "They don't mind hunters on their property, but they want to know who's there," points out Chester County WCO Keith Mullin.

Mel Schake, Information and Education Supervisor for the Southwest Region, says he's been telling students at HTE courses that if an individual presents himself properly to a landowner who has his property posted, they'd be surprised at how often permission is granted.

The main reason most people don't bother seeking permission is that it takes time, or they are simply not willing to exert the extra effort to find the owners who allow hunting. It is, quite frankly, much easier to write off a piece of posted property than to take time to find out why the land is posted and work toward getting on the other side of the signs.

For those who have the drive to investigate a new spot, the best advice is to develop a plan. First, narrow the search to a specific area, whether it be for its trophy deer potential, or simply because deer numbers are high and the chances of tagging any deer are good. Fortunately, most people are aware of at least one area such as this because they often see deer — including a

few nice bucks — during their travels, or they hear reports from others who hunt there.

When considering where to begin, hone in on a specific township, town or even a road. While nothing is a given, the search can be narrowed down even further by looking for potential situations where landowners may have more deer than they want.

For example, nursery owners sometimes have problems with bucks rubbing their antlers on trees, farmers often suffer from crop damage, and some landowners' gardens and yards are ravaged

by deer — especially in

more urban settings.

Two areas that come to mind when talking about a tremendous amount of private land and healthy deer populations in many spots are the southeastern and southwestern corners of Pennsylvania. One way to make an inroad, especially in places like these, is by seeking permission to hunt with a bow. Truth is, archery hunting is done quietly, it's relatively unobtrusive, and it's perceived as being safer than gun hunting. Many landowners grant bowhunting privileges despite turning away firearm hunters.

Allegheny County is a prime spot for bowhunters. In 2000 bowhunters took 3,420 whitetails, which translates into nearly 38 percent of the county's total harvest. Not surprisingly, former Allegheny County WCO Jack Lucas can attest to the popularity of bowhunting in his old area. Lucas says there are more hunters in the field during archery season in Allegheny County than any of the other deer sea-



sons. The reason so many of these hunters gain access and are successful, he says, is because they get out and do some leg work.

Lucas, who used to patrol the eastern part of the county, explains that many hunters do a little pre-season scouting and locate woodlots, then knock on some doors to find out who owns the property. If the owner can't be found, the local tax office can help. (Tax maps identify owners of specific parcels of land.)

WCO Mullin points out that a hunter can use the archery approach for other seasons as well. For example, during the firearm season a hunter could explain to the landowner that he or she hunts from a portable treestand, so that any shots taken will be directed towards the ground.

When seeking permission — whether for hunting with a bow or gun — there are several common sense things a person can also do to tip the scales in his or her favor. One of the most important is getting out well in advance of hunting season. “I would say that's probably the biggest problem most people have; they wait until the last minute,” said Mullin.

Most landowners are surprised when a person shows up in spring or summer. If they don't grant permission right away, they may say something like, “Stop back and see me later in the year.” Don't hesitate to take them up on the offer. A second, or even a third visit, shows them you are truly interested and take hunting seriously.

Personal appearance is also extremely important when approaching a landowner, especially on the first visit. The bottom line is the nicer a person dresses and looks, the better impression he or she will make. (This means don't knock at the door wearing hunting attire.)

Of course, when talking with the

landowner be honest and stress good hunter ethics. Give the person an idea how often you plan to be there, and if you hunt with someone else, show up with that person from the start, or tell the landowner up front.

Offering to assist with chores around the property is another good idea. Sometime during the year a farmer may need help baling hay or fixing a fence. Or, if the person is elderly, mowing the lawn or raking leaves can be valuable services. Offering a hand shows a person's intentions are genuine and is an almost guaranteed way of making sure the welcome mat is put out for the following hunting season.

After a person earns the privilege to hunt on someone's land, the good will should not come to an abrupt halt. Always remember to respect the landowner's wishes: Park where told, don't put up treestands unless given permission, close all gates and fences when passing through pastureland and never litter. If you are hunting and find some litter, pick it up and let the landowner know you found the litter and are taking it out. These little things are just common sense but so often are forgotten. And speaking of little, something that takes only a few seconds is a simple “thank you.”

During the holidays it's always nice to visit with a small gift to show your gratitude for hunting privileges. A gift certificate, fruit basket or even just a card are all appreciated. If a hunter is successful during the season, offering to share some game isn't a bad idea either.

Of course, once hunting season is over don't be a stranger. Stop and visit the landowner throughout the year. He or she will more than likely appreciate the company, especially if they are elderly.

By applying some of these tips a hunter will probably gain access to at least one piece of private property this season. And, if things go as planned, that big 8-point buck won't even notice the newly hung treestand or the shadowy figure perched in it. □

Buttons to Antlers:

Part I — Dispersal of Yearling Bucks

By Christopher S. Rosenberry, PhD

PGC Wildlife Biometrician

A BUCK quietly walks past a hunter as the early rays of sunlight mark the opening of another season. The hunter does not shoot, however, because this particular buck is a button buck. The little “buttons” on his head came nowhere close to meeting the 3-inch minimum antler length.

Many hunters have experienced such a situation. If only the buck had been a year older. But all is not lost, the hunter thinks, because the young deer will be in the same area when the next buck season rolls around.

Actually, though, what are the chances a hunter will see the same button buck a year later? This is the question I intend to answer over the course of this 2-part series on the lives of bucks from buttons to antlers. This first part will cover the movements and the social environment of young bucks, and what causes them to do what they do. The second part will incorporate information on deer behavior into applications landowners and others might consider for managing deer on areas of varying size.

A timeline and some definitions of terms will help clarify important factors in the life of young bucks. In Pennsylvania, most fawns are born in late May or early June. During buck season, most male fawns, or button bucks, will be about six months old. When the buck reaches its first birthday, it will begin to grow its first set of antlers. When buck season rolls around again, the young buck will be about 18 months old and have its first set of antlers.



BEHAVIORAL COMPARISONS suggest that dispersing yearling bucks appear more subordinate in competitive interaction (antler sparring) with other bucks than yearling bucks that do not disperse.

For the purposes of this article, “yearling buck” will refer to a buck between 7 and 18 months of age. “Natal range” describes the area where a fawn is born. Most young bucks will still be on their natal range at six months of age. “Dispersal” refers to the movements of yearling bucks away from their natal ranges.

What is the chance a hunter will see the same button buck a year later?

Generally speaking, the chances are not good. First, a button buck must survive the hunting seasons. In Pennsylvania, 25 percent of the antlerless deer harvest consists of button bucks. Second, a button buck that does survive the hunting seasons will probably be miles away from that location by the time the next buck season arrives. Research conducted across the coun-

try indicates 50 to 80 percent of young bucks will disperse an average of about five miles from their natal ranges. Dispersal distances of 30 to 100 miles have been reported, but such long distance movements are less common. Although little is known about exact movements during dispersal, dispersing yearling bucks have been known to swim across big rivers and other large bodies of water.

When do yearling bucks disperse?

Although young bucks may disperse at any time, most dispersal occurs during two periods: spring fawning season (May-June) and fall breeding season (September-November) (Figure 1). From birth to about one year of age, a buck lives with his mother and siblings. As the fawning season approaches, a yearling buck's mother reduces her movements, becomes less tolerant of him and other deer, and prepares to give birth to new fawns. Some yearling bucks will disperse during this time of family group separation.

In many areas, dispersal occurs more frequently during fall breeding season. In Maryland, for example, fall dispersal began in mid-September and

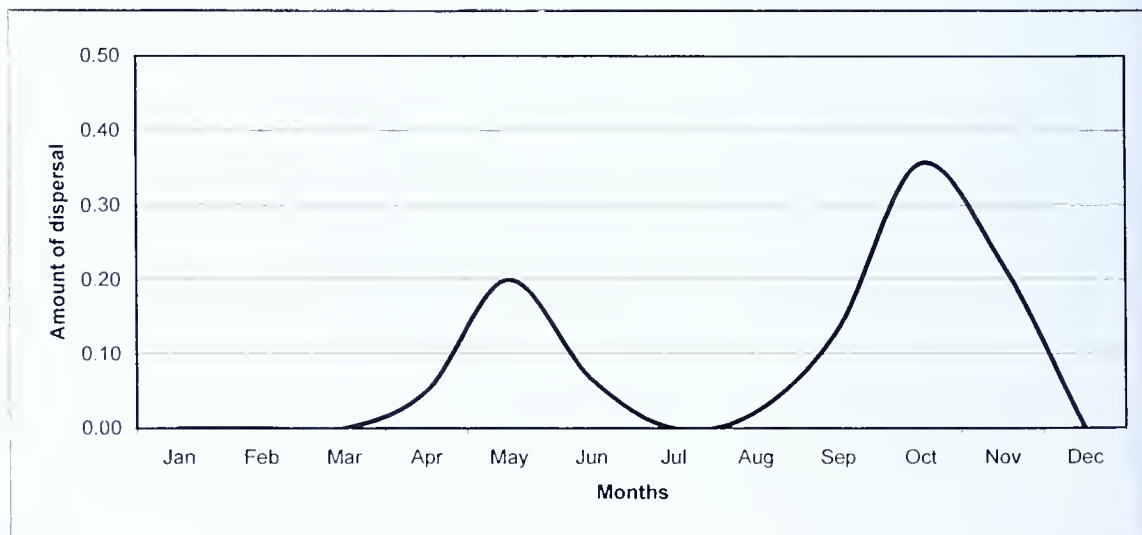
concluded in early November, prior to the peak of the breeding season. Once breeding peaked, in mid-November, dispersal movements stopped.

Following dispersal, the area where a yearling buck settles is likely to be his home range for life. Studies from many areas report this common pattern of dispersal. A yearling buck seen during buck season is probably going to be in the same area for the rest of his life.

Why do yearling bucks disperse?

Social pressures probably influence dispersal of yearling bucks. Competition from other bucks and maternal aggression are two prominent ideas to explain dispersal. Early deer research noted dispersal during the breeding season and speculated that aggressive competition from older bucks caused yearling bucks to disperse. A more recent study investigated another possibility — a yearling buck's mother. In this study, yearling bucks maturing with their mothers were more likely to disperse than yearling bucks that were orphaned before one year of age. From these results, it was concluded that adult does cause dispersal of yearling bucks, and that orphaning a button buck reduces his chance of dispersal. These results have been incorporated into quality deer management strategies where

Figure 1 General timing and intensity of yearling buck dispersal



hunters are encouraged to harvest adult does. By harvesting more adult does, it's expected that more young bucks will be orphaned and, therefore, stay in the area.

Unfortunately, reducing dispersal may not be as simple as increasing adult doe harvests.

In a study I worked on, competition with other yearling bucks appeared to influence dispersal more than aggression from adult does. In this study, yearling bucks were captured and marked with solar-powered ear tag transmitters and color streamers. The combination of transmitters and color streamers permitted visual identification of individual bucks and monitoring of long distance movements. Social behavior of yearling bucks was observed throughout summer and fall. After fall dispersal, behavior of yearling bucks that dispersed was compared to behavior of those that did not. Behavioral comparisons suggested that dispersing yearling bucks appeared more subordinate in competitive interactions (antler sparring) with other bucks than yearling bucks that did not disperse.

There was no evidence that adult females influenced dispersal of yearling bucks. Thus, in this study, it appeared that competition with other yearling males influenced dispersal.

Social behavior of white-tailed deer varies in different areas, and the two most investigated causes of dispersal (male competition and adult female aggression) are based on social behavior. Thus, it is likely that causes of dispersal could vary according to changes in social structure and behavior of different deer populations. Although current research provides insights into the social environment of dispersing yearling bucks, it has not identified a universal cause of yearling buck dispersal.



What's the chance that MIKE MCGUIRE'S buck was taken in the same area where it was born? Not good, as most button bucks will disperse miles from their natal range by the next deer season.

Conclusions:

Dispersal is a significant part of the lives of most yearling bucks. Next month I'll discuss the impacts of dispersal on deer management decisions on areas from hundreds of acres to a hundred thousand acres or more. Below is a summary of main points of dispersal:

Chances of seeing a button buck a year later are not high because some will be taken during deer seasons, and of those that survive, most will disperse miles from their natal range by the next deer season.

Dispersal is likely to occur during spring fawning and fall breeding seasons, when yearling bucks experience social changes.

The reason why bucks disperse is not likely to be a single factor. Studies with conflicting results emphasize that deer behave differently in different areas.

Once a yearling buck has chosen an area to live after dispersal, he will probably remain in that area for the rest of his life. □

FOREVER FROM HERE

PENN'S WOODS SKETCHBOOK/BOB SOPCHICK

YOU MAY KNOW A PLACE LIKE THIS. While hunting or hiking you always go out of your way to stop there — a rock outcropping high in the uplands where you can see far out into the valley and beyond where the mountains, blue and flat like those painted on Chinese plates, overlap in the distance.

There are few windows on our heavily forested ridges that give an unobstructed view, but I know several such places. I'm not speaking of commercially developed or preserved scenic overlooks, or touristy waysides, but remote places that demand rigorous climbing to get to, places without signs and railings or the scrawls of vandals or litter. Almost any elevated view, be it treestand or peak,

allows us to leave the claustrophobic immediacy of our lives, and our demeanor changes instantly. We look far out into the void, and simultaneously deep within ourselves, realizing that we are part of this grandeur, that we have a station in the majesty before us. It is easier to comprehend our humble role when studying a sylvan panorama than when gazing at the heavens, trying to define our niche in the incomprehensible infinite.

My favorite place with a view is a remote outcropping of black sandstone, scarred and weathered, with a tiered seat of rocks like a chair.

I must follow a deer trail through thick laurel for some distance if I approach from on top, and the climb from below up through the tumbled boulders is difficult. But the effort is worth it when I emerge from the brush and the world suddenly opens up, the sky stretching fast away, a steady breeze cooling me as I scan the horizon. From here I can look down on the backs of migrating hawks, listen to several gobblers miles apart or watch a blizzard fall like a curtain in the valley. Often I dwell not only on the splendor before my eyes, but think of a time before any human stood here and wondered.

The valley and surrounding mountains are product and witness to shifting tectonics — ancient geologic history to us — but to these hills, only an occasional restlessness. They have a character unlike any others, standing in solemn ranks, old even when the glaciers retreated. These mountains are the bones of the earth, and all manner of life upon their fragile skin is but fleeting and curious ephemera. But even these mountains, seemingly so permanent, are little more than protrusions of land slowly being eroded and reshaped.

Sometimes I wonder what other eyes looked into this same void from here. What determined forms worked their way up the steep ridge and rested on these same rocks? To what other creatures is this outcropping a focal point?



THREE CENTURIES AGO, and the vast forest beyond is much different than it is now. The deep hollow below is filled with towering hemlocks and the ridges are comprised of mixed hardwoods. In the distance the gentle mountains are not scarred by powerlines or roads. No blinking radio towers rise above the ridgeline. The hand of man, although present, has wrought no wholesale destruction. Lilted birdsong bubbles up from below, clear and sweet, not drowned by train or plane or the distant roar of commerce.

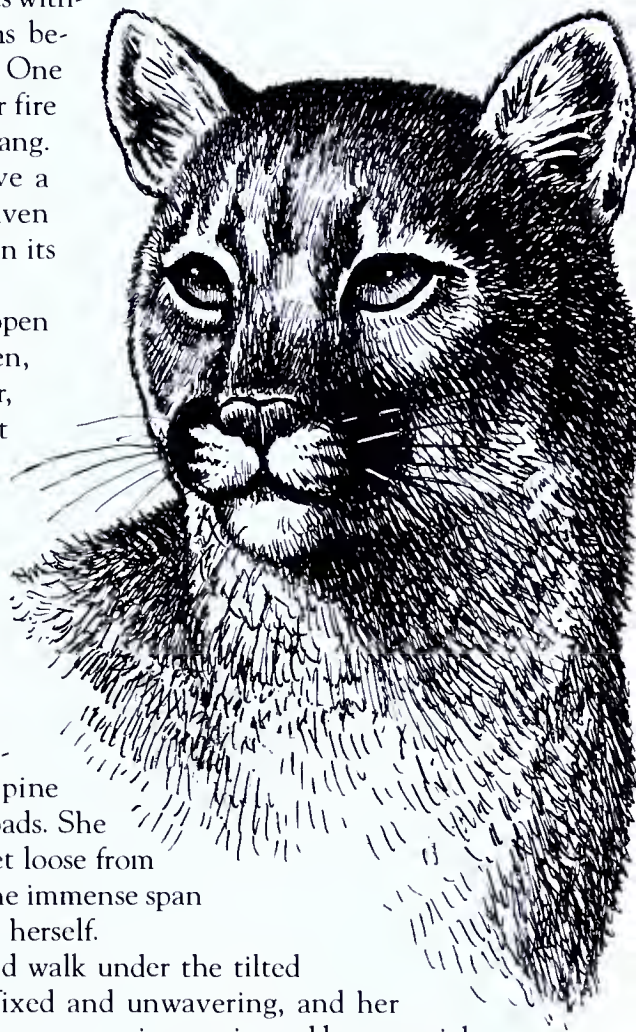
The dark forest grows darker yet as storm clouds gather in the west, moving into the valley with great deliberation like a herd of cautious elk emerging from black timber into a clearing. The air is dense and humid, and three native hunters seek shelter under the expansive overhang where they will wait out the storm. A raven croaks as it passes by, black bird against black sky, difficult to see, as if the clouds themselves speak in that odd tongue. Lightning flashes horizontally, thunder rumbles up the valley and echoes back again. The sky collapses and rain falls straight down, silvery and shimmering. The opposite hillside fades, and their world is now defined by a perimeter of torrents cascading down the face of the overlook.

The hunters sit patiently on their haunches without speaking. They have waited out storms before, and this one has stalled in the uplands. One hunter picks up a charred stub from an older fire and makes marks on the belly of the overhang. He draws a raven, beak agape, flying above a lightning bolt. Does he imagine that the raven brought the storm, that it carried lightning in its claws and thunder in its belly?

Sitting under the overhang myself with open sketchbook I study my rendition of a raven, flying west to east, from one page to another, the gutter of the sketchbook like the great valley itself.

150 YEARS LATER and another silent form moves up the slope. Its eyes are hunter's eyes, yellow-green, expressionless, the pupils alternately contracting and dilating as she walks in and out of light and shadow. The cougar winds through the talus, mouth open slightly, white teeth glinting below bristling whiskers. She is the tawny color of pine straw, and no sound ushers from her broad pads. She walks up an enormous fallen tree that has let loose from the ridge after four centuries and pauses in the immense span of the root mass that hold rocks larger than herself.

A doe and her fawn suddenly appear and walk under the tilted log. The gaze of the lion is immediately fixed and unwavering, and her muscles gather, but she does not give herself away as an inexperienced hunter might. She, too, knows patience; only the black tip of her tail twitches. The deer are walking around the base of the overhang and are about to disappear when the cougar leaps, gathering her feet impossibly on the near vertical rock face and launches again. The



doe utters a last guttural bleat that rises then muffles.

After feeding, the cougar caches the deer and rests atop the outcropping. She grooms herself and lies down, luxuriating in the last rays of the sun.

All seems peaceful, but beyond

the farthest pale mountain the woods echo

with the steady blows of iron chunking into wood as settlers fell the primeval forest. Each great pine prostrate on the ground is another fallen enemy, each furrow cut by the plowshare another wound inflicted in their constant battle with the savage wilderness.

I often think of the cougar, wolf, and even of the occasional bison that may have wandered here, or of older creatures yet; of huge dire wolves and mammoths drifting across misty glades. Or beyond that to older times, of freshwater sharks and ferns tall as pines in the steaming forest, of the sea whose breakers crashed beyond the farthest mountain. With some imagination and desire I can see all that from here.

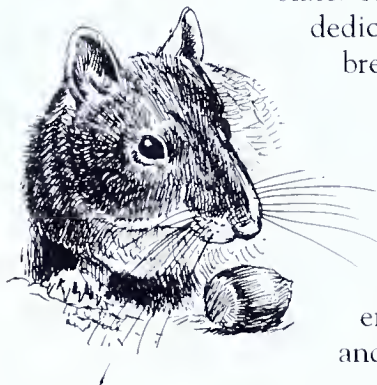


THE LANDSCAPE CHANGED dramatically as the last cougar left its last track in the hills. The forests were logged and immense brushfires further ravaged the land. The great stands of native chestnut trees were felled by disease and would not rise again. Oaks soon dominated the uplands. Once near decimation, the deer population exploded, and catastrophe was at hand. Red and black clad hunters who stood atop the overlook often saw long lines of deer in the winter woods. The deer were small and thin, but seeing 50 a day became common — then tradition. Unfortunately, they could not see the forest for the deer — and the forest was dying.

I recall one bitterly cold day in 1966 when a long parade of 21 pathetic does and fawns filed by. Far across the hollow I saw another line going in the opposite direction. I felt not like a hunter at all, but an observer in some bleak and forlorn stockyard.

The combination of bad science and politics had become something akin to ecological alchemy and the forest lay gasping. Today, as I look out from this precipice I feel content, knowing that a wave of moral responsibility is washing over these hills in the form of good science and management. The whitetail is what biologists call a keystone species, a pivotal animal that determines whether other species flourish or not, whether the forest itself lives or dies. Deer are the iconic species of this keystone

state. The time has come when we must re-evaluate recreation, and dedicate our efforts to long-term re-creation. This woods will breathe again. From here I can see hope.



THIS ROCKY BASTION is home to other creatures, too. The beautiful eastern woodrat is a secretive dweller that nests here within the flat shelves and is a quiet nocturnal denizen of this sandstone keep. The woodrat shares the outcropping with another handsome citizen, the timber rattler. It, too, enjoys the dry southern exposure and lack of human activity and finds the numerous chambers ideal for den sites. At almost

any time you can see turkey vultures tilting in the wind from here. The vultures also nest under the overhang. On a winter day I saw several coyote tracks made the night before, right up at the edge of the precipice. I like to imagine that they howled from here.

At one time the aforementioned creatures were regarded as lesser animals, undesirable, repugnant, evil. Those notions are long past. Unlike the Norway rat that thrives in the squalor of man, the threatened woodrat is sensitive to changes in habitat such as roads and development. The timber rattler as well has emerged as an icon of wilderness. The vulture is appreciated for the lovely gift of its flight by ever-growing legions of birders. Its stature has risen from ghoulish bird of prey to what it really is — a stork-like bird with a keen sense of smell. The presence of the eastern coyote harkens to the days of the cougar and wolf. I am delighted that Penn's Woods once again has another active predator other than man, one that hunts every day. The prey will be keener for it, and a balance will be struck.

SITTING ON A PRECIPICE, staring into a void can be quite spiritual. Author Stephen Bodio, in his book, *Edges of the Wild*, writes “New people (pop-culture, self-righteous types) say the word *spiritual* a lot. They have never looked long into any void.”

Lately, there has been much written about spirituality, self-awareness, inner-focus, finding the child within, living in the moment, empowerment and lots of other gobble-dyhook. Bookstores are full of manuals on how to attain these things and talk shows are replete with “centered” gurus spouting before wide-eyed audiences eager to gain some element of awareness by proxy and not practice. But that doesn't surprise me, be it steaks or spiritualism, they want it neatly packaged and handed to them. Who has time to sit on a rock and think?

Spend only a few minutes staring into a void and you may dwell upon the trees and the rocks and the wind and the creatures. Spend a few years there and the wondering mind peels back layers of time, understands what 4.6 billion years is and what it is not. Look beyond the obvious, and with some imagination and desire you, too, may fancy that the raven carries lightning in its claws and thunder in its belly.

Having lingered on these rocks long enough over the decades it seems that I can see forever from here, and I have learned that there really is more out there than meets the eye.



FIELD NOTES

Blended In

BEDFORD — My friend Ray Earnest so admired the “leafy-flage” camo jacket that I wear during archery season that he bought a complete outfit for himself. After hunting one day he told me that his new camo worked so well that a bird had perched on his head. I told him he’s lucky it wasn’t a woodpecker.

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT



Out and About

TIOGA — One sure sign that spring has arrived in northern Pennsylvania is the emergence of bears from their dens. I received four nuisance bear calls in a 2-day period last spring, which included bears destroying birdfeeders, attacking pet rabbits and, my favorite, a bear blocking the entrance to an ice cream place on Route 6 in Gaines Township. The bear was probably just waiting its turn in line.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE,
MIDDLEBURY CENTER

Resourceful

I noticed a bluebird plucking hairs from the carcass of a roadkilled gray fox, no doubt to start its nest.

— LMO KEITH P. SANFORD, MIFFLINVILLE

Start Walking

McKEAN — While my supervisor was telling me about the new deer control permits for our Forest-Game cooperators, he told me that I would have to walk the perimeters of each property on the list. He asked how deep the snow was and if I had snowshoes, and then he told me at least four times of what good shape I was going to be in when I was done with the surveys.

— WCO ROSE LUCIANE, CUSTER CITY

Classified

TRAINING SCHOOL — Wanted: Wildlife conservation officer trainee is now accepting unwanted brain matter and/or storage space to place an overwhelming amount of information.

— TRAINEE TIMOTHY WENRICH, HARRISBURG

Just Chillin’

Game lands maintenance supervisor Allen Anke noticed a coyote sitting on a piece of ice floating in the middle of the Delaware River last winter. When he stopped the truck to watch, the coyote jumped into the open water and swam to the New York shore.

— LMO JOHN C. SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Honest Mistake

TRAINING SCHOOL — LMO Scott Bills was instructing us on waterfowl identification at Haldeman Island when he emphasized the importance of keeping an eye on the Susquehanna River for waterfowl while we glassed the ponds. I noticed some movement through the trees on the river and blurted out that something was floating down. Everyone turned in time to see a piece of driftwood, and then someone pointed out that a wood duck is not really made out of wood.

— TRAINEE RICHARD W. JOYCE, HARRISBURG

Not a Bright Thing to Do

WARREN — I was walking along the Allegheny River and couldn't help but notice all the garbage littering the bank. A whiskey bottle with a note inside caught my eye. The note read, "If you find this please call . . . , with a phone number enclosed. I can only imagine the look on that person's face when the call they received was from me.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, TIDIOUTE

Wasn't Going to Happen

LYCOMING — I would like to thank the two Dans who gave me a hand dragging a roadkilled bear up a steep bank to the edge of Route 118. After wading up to my waist and floating the 330-pound bear across Little Muncy Creek, it was obvious I wasn't going to get the bear up the bank on my own.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT,
MONTGOMERYVILLE

Turnabout

During the fuel shortage in 1979 my soon-to-be-wife was a schoolteacher and could walk to the school, which was only 500 feet from her house. Now, as fuel prices are again high, and there are rumors of a fuel shortage, fate has struck again. The Southwest Region Office is relocating from Ligonier to that very same school. Now, I can walk to work.

— REGIONAL FORESTER DONALD E. LITTLE,
LIGONIER

Back to Wildlife ID Class

When I was a kid animal cartoon characters included Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Tweety Bird but, recently, while watching a cartoon with my 5-year-old grandson, one creature was a cat on one end and a dog on the other. I asked my grandson what in the heck it was, and he replied, "Grandpa, everybody knows that's Cat-dog!" Boy, how things have changed.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE



Got a Hoot Out of It

ADAMS — I placed a mounted great horned owl I was using for a school program on a bookcase shelf in my basement, and later that evening I heard my wife screaming when she needed something from the basement and hit the light switch. It took her about two hours to calm down. Sorry about that, Nancy.

— WCO LARRY HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

Not Quite

UNION — A hunter who shot a doe by mistake during buck season turned the deer in, and while filling out the form, he mentioned that he hasn't taken many deer. "It's probably easy for you," he said "because you are a game warden and know where all the deer are." I must be a poor WCO then, because I hunted for four days during the flintlock season and never fired my rifle.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Never Missed a Beat

TRAINING SCHOOL — WCO Tim Grenoble was thoughtful enough to wait until after lunch to demonstrate the procedure for removing an embryo from a roadkilled doe to obtain breeding information. With apple in hand, WCO Grenoble began the process, finishing within a few minutes. He never missed a bite, either.

— TRAINEE JASON L. DECOSKEY, HARRISBURG

Has it "Covered"

PERRY — David and Ida Froggatt of Duncannon had a misguided hawk crash through two windows. When I arrived I asked if they knew what kind of hawk it was and David pointed to the cover of his *Game News* and said, "It's one of these." Sure enough, it was a Cooper's hawk, which graced the February cover.

— WCO WILLIAM M. WILLIAMS, MILLERSTOWN

Churning Waters

McKEAN — I was looking through my binoculars when I spotted a mink on the bank of the Allegheny River chasing a kangaroo mouse. The mouse escaped by jumping on some floating debris and then began swimming across the river. Just as the mouse cleared the riffles and began to swim in calmer water, the area around it seemingly exploded as a northern pike grabbed it. It dawned on me that I had found a place to trap, a good place to fish, and an area where I definitely didn't want to swim.

— WCO THOMAS M. SABOLCIK,
PORT ALLEGHENY

Look Around

YORK — We have some unusual wildlife in this populated county. There's a rare black crown night heron rookery in the city of York. Bald eagles and ospreys nest on the Susquehanna River, and we have a growing population of river otters and beavers, as well as just about every kind of waterfowl known to the Atlantic Flyway.

— WCO RODNEY P. MEE, EAST BERLIN

Dedicated Mom

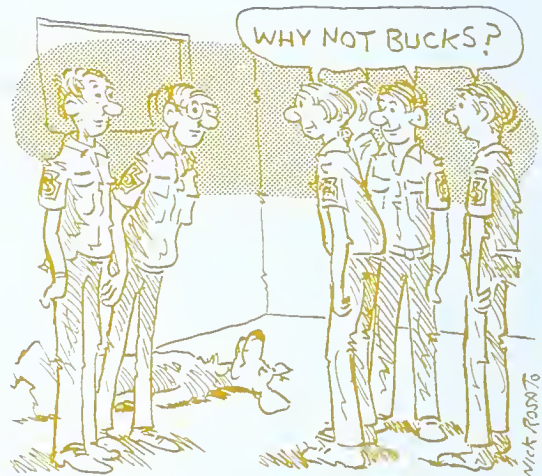
MONROE — I helped process a bear that had a missing left front paw that we knew was from an injury two years ago, but more recently had a rear leg shattered in an apparent auto collision. The bear was traveling with a cub that was completely healthy, giving testimony to the vigor of these animals.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Looked Bigger on the "Hoof"

POTTER — Last season Ed Bailey helped a man who had hit a bear trail it, and Ed got ahead of the hunter and found the dead bear first. When Ed dragged the small bear back to where the hunter was waiting the man said, "That's not the bear I shot at; that one must have fallen out of the big one I shot."

— WCO WILLIAM C. RAGOSTA, COUDERSPORT



You Had to Ask

TRAINING SCHOOL — WCO Tim Grenoble had just finished a demonstration on how to remove an embryo from a deer when I asked if we would be doing this with all the roadkilled deer we pick up. "Only the does not the bucks," answered WCO Grenoble.

— TRAINEE DANIEL SCHMIDT, HARRISBURG

Well Done

CUMBERLAND — At a Big Spring Fish and Game Club meeting I had the honor of presenting a plaque and a set of binoculars to Isaac Lopp of Newville, who placed fourth in the Senior Division of the 2000 Hunter Education Youth Essay Contest. Members of the Big Spring Fish and Game Club also presented Isaac with a single-shot 12-gauge for his achievement. Congratulations go out to both Isaac and club members for their commitment to our hunting heritage.

— WCO EDWARD B. STEFFAN, NEWVILLE

Long Dry Spell

FULTON — Last year, after hunting with a muzzleloader for 25 years, Warfordsburg resident Jerry Mellott Sr. finally connected on an antlerless deer. His first deer with a smokepole came on his 50th birthday, so his hunting buddies had the deer mounted for him.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Sounds Like . . .

BRADFORD — A hunter who had taken his HTE course many years ago needed to have his card replaced because he was going out West to hunt. I asked him what year he had taken the course and the name of the instructor. After thinking for a few minutes he told me the year, but that he wasn't sure who the instructor was, but thought the name was bear, wolf, or something like that. I knew right away he was talking about Deputy Fox. After checking the records I issued him a replacement card.

— WCO WILLIAM BOWER, TROY

No Excuse

SOMERSET — While checking the hunting license of a man suspected of taking a turkey out of season, I noticed he had a missing buck tag. Checking further, I discovered he had not mailed in his report card. When I informed him that it was a requirement to mail the card within 10 days after harvesting a deer, he said he didn't have a stamp. I guess he should have looked more closely at the card, because it's postage paid.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Never Live It Down

GREENE — While conducting an HTE class at the Mt. Morris Sportsmen's Club, I had just passed beneath a huge moose mount when suddenly it crashed to the floor. No one was injured, and I was relieved to know that I wouldn't have to explain how I was hurt by a moose on an accident report.

— WCO RODNEY L. BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Crow About It

I've noticed several stocked ringneck pheasant roosters on game lands here that made it through the severe winter. That says something about our habitat, but the lack of females diminishes the hope of any natural reproduction. I'm sure the roosters concur.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Full Moon?

CHESTER — Here's a sample of some calls I received one week in March: A lady wanted me to remove the deer living in the woods behind her new house because "she didn't move to the country." A man wanted to report three men carrying guns he had seen near his property last fall. A lady wanted me to remove the wild rabbits in her yard because she was afraid to let her children play near them.

— WCO MATT TEEHAN, UWCHLAND



Saved the Day

TRAINING SCHOOL — After the first week at school I was confident I was adjusting to the rigorous schedule, but during the second week I was feeling extremely tired each morning. I told my roommates that I was exhausted, and then they smiled and said they had been beating me with pillows each night to curb my snoring. They stopped with their nightly assaults, however, when we were issued earmuffs.

— TRAINEE CLINT DENIKER, HARRISBURG

"Snow" Bird

BUTLER — I spotted two Canada geese along a creek and noticed that one seemed to have something white on its head. Upon closer examination with binoculars, I discovered that the top of the goose's head was almost completely white with just a few specks of black. Its mate didn't seem to mind, though, and probably thought it a unique headpiece.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, RENFREW

Heard You Talking

BERKS — Regional forester Dave Henry and I were discussing the tremendous deer harvest last year, and that we were still seeing large numbers of deer and the negative impacts they are causing on their environment, when Dave pointed out the window at seven deer running past our Southeast Region Office window.

— WCO DAVID BROCKMEIER, MOHNTON

All Walks of Life

TRAINING SCHOOL — I'm amazed at the diversity of the students making up the 26th Class. We have former police officers, machinists, park rangers, teachers, prison guards and military veterans, just to name a few. It appears as though those who are dedicated to protecting the commonwealth's wildlife are as diverse as that wildlife.

— TRAINEE JUSTIN T. KLUGH, HARRISBURG

What Next?

DELAWARE — Deputy Bill Cosenza and I had a safety zone violation go to court, so I got photos of the houses that were within the Safety Zone. One was supposed to be labeled the house that belonged to the Wolf family, but I mistakenly labeled it the Fox house. During the trial Bill was on the witness stand when I asked him what the distance was from the defendant's treestand to the Fox house. This confused him, and then the judge, who was also confused, said, "Okay, we have the Wolf house and the Fox house, so where's the Rabbit house?" Sorry, Bill, but at least we won the case.

— WCO DARREN J. DAVID, ASTON



A New Experience

ARMSTRONG — While on vacation in Sarasota, I got to spend a day on patrol in Manatee County with Lt. Tom Ware of the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. Tom went out of his way to show me around, and it was interesting to see and hear the native wildlife. As suspected, they have the same concerns and fight the same battles we do. One major difference, however, is that I have not yet carried a 9-foot alligator in my trunk.

— WCO BARRY J. SETH, WORTHINGTON

Dedication

MONTGOMERY — I'm proud to have two Outstanding HTE Instructor award winners in my district. Gary Williams, who has 30 years of service, was a recent past winner, and this year's winner was Dick Endy, who has been teaching HTE for 35 years.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICK

Plenty Left

MONROE — With a record bear kill last year some hunters may be concerned about the impact on the population. They need not worry; a week after the season I dealt with a bear that weighed more than 700 pounds, and just after that I located a 200-pound female denned on a rocky outcropping.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Concurrent antlered and antlerless seasons approved

THE 2001-02 deer seasons and bag limits approved by the Board of Game Commissioners at its April meeting represent a major step towards better deer management. The concurrent antlered and antlerless deer seasons for rifle hunters; a limited October antlerless deer rifle season; a longer muzzleloader season for antlerless deer in October; and the ability to use all antlerless deer licenses on public and private lands are changes designed to enhance deer hunting opportunities and antlerless deer hunting efficiency.

"The actions of the Board have demonstrated a bonding between the scientific-wing of the Game Commission and its policy makers," said Dr. Gary Alt, Deer Management Section supervisor. "Working together, we have set a goal to be one of the national leaders in deer research and management within the next five years. The measures approved today are important steps in that direction."

Alt characterized the 2001-02 deer seasons as significant strides in balancing Pennsylvania's deer herd with its habitat and beginning to correct the buck:doe ratio. He also noted that the new seasons will help reduce the emphasis on buck hunting, while providing greater hunting opportunities for antlerless deer.

"In 2000, our goal was to stabilize the deer herd," Alt said. "We needed to harvest between 300,000 and

310,000 antlerless deer. Using the seasons and bag limits put in place last year, hunters hit the mark, taking slightly more than 301,000 antlerless deer.

"In 2001, our goal is to reduce the statewide deer herd by about five percent. To do that, we will need to harvest roughly 350,000 antlerless deer."

Under the concurrent deer hunting structure, all hunters with valid antlerless tags may begin hunting for does as well as bucks on Monday, Nov. 26 — the traditional start of the rifle buck season. This regular firearm antlerless deer season will conclude on Saturday, Dec. 8.

The Board also expanded the early muzzleloader deer season. This year it will run from Oct. 13-20. This will give muzzleloader hunters an unprecedented opportunity to hunt antlerless deer when the weather is warm.

The Board also approved a measure to allow juniors and seniors, disabled persons with a permit to use a vehicle, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services and U.S. Coast Guard to hunt antlerless deer from Oct. 18-20, with any lawful sporting arm of their choice. Of course, these hunters must possess an antlerless deer license.

"These expanded opportunities for deer hunters in October are one way the Game Commission is seeking to enable families to spend more time

afield together,” Alt said. “Additionally, these early seasons will help us achieve our goal of harvesting more antlerless deer before the November rut, which will enable us to improve the buck:doe ratio when it matters most.”

Bowhunters will be permitted to pursue either antlered or antlerless deer during the overlap with the early muzzleloader, antlerless-only deer seasons.

The Board eliminated the “Private Land Only” restriction on unsold antlerless deer licenses, and now will allow any hunter to apply for up to two unsold antlerless deer licenses, in addition to one regular antlerless deer license. Hunters also may apply for additional antlerless deer licenses in the Special Regulations Areas.

The Commissioners withdrew the proposal to have a statewide archery antlerless deer season begin on Sept. 15. The early archery deer season will begin on Sept. 29 and conclude on Nov. 10.

Commissioners also approved allowing multiple deer harvests per day. Before harvesting additional deer, however, hunters must tag the deer previously taken.

Alt fulfilled his pledge to hold a meeting within 50 miles of every Pennsylvanian by holding more than 60 around the state this past winter and spring. Alt estimates that he talked with nearly 25,000 citizens.

During his presentation at the April meeting, Alt noted that he had heard from many hunters and deer processors who were concerned that the proposal to open antlerless deer season on Saturday, Nov. 24, would overwhelm processors and could cause meat spoilage.

“Based on this very real concern, I urge the Commissioners to withdraw the suggestion that we begin hunting antlerless deer on Nov. 24,” Alt said. “While I believe that such a proposal would be advantageous, enabling more bucks to reach the older age classes, the time is not right for this step.”

Alt noted that the seasons approved by the Board will greatly enhance recreational opportunities and the efficiency of the antlerless license system. That, in turn, enabled the agency to keep antlerless allocations at reasonable levels. He also stressed the longer antlerless deer seasons will reduce the impact of weather on antlerless deer harvests.

The new proposals, it’s hoped, will cause hunters to be more selective, either holding out for bigger-racked bucks or larger, adult does. Also, by allowing hunters to put venison in the freezer earlier in the year and by offering increased opportunities to harvest antlerless deer, pressure on bucks should decline.

Based on the increased hunter efficiencies expected from the new

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

antlerless seasons and bag limits, for the 2001-02 seasons, the Commissioners approved a statewide antlerless license allocation of 692,500 — 52,400 fewer than last year. (These figures do not include the six Special Regulations Area counties. The statewide total, including the Special Regulations

Area counties, is 780,250 — 50,400 fewer than last year.

During 2000-01, hunters purchased all but 1,863 of the 744,900 antlerless licenses allocated. (Including Special Regulations Areas counties, hunters purchased all but 2,694 of the 830,650 antlerless licenses allocated.)

Elk hunt approved

FOLLOWING MORE than a year of preparation and public input, the Board of Game Commissioners gave final approval to the state's first elk hunting season in 70 years.

"This season is based on more than three decades of biological research," said Rawley Cogan, PGC elk biologist. "This year's aerial survey conservatively estimates the elk population to be 622. Based on recent trends, we expect the population to be about 700 by this fall, when the hunting season begins."

At the end of 2000, the General Assembly and Gov. Tom Ridge enacted Senate Bill 612, which created an elk hunting license and established a fee of \$25 for residents and \$250 for nonresidents. The new law also allows the Game Commission to accept applications, along with a \$10 non-refundable fee, and to hold a public drawing. For the upcoming season, 30 elk licenses will be made available.

The hunt has been set for Nov. 12-17. The Board also established potential extensions of Dec. 26-Dec. 31, and Jan. 2-7, excluding Sundays, if the harvest quota is not met.

Applications will be available and accepted through "The Outdoor Shop" on the Game Commission's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us). They also will be included in the 2001-02 Hunting and Trapping Digest.

Individuals are not required to purchase a resident or nonresident general hunting license to apply for the drawing. However, all those who are drawn will have to purchase a general hunting license, and attend a mandatory orientation program by the Game Commission, before being allowed to purchase the elk license.

The public drawing will be held on Sept. 29, at a time and location to be announced.

Those applying for an elk license will have the option to indicate their preference for either an antlered or antlerless elk license, and their preference of elk management area.

The Board also adopted minimum standards for sporting arms and ammunition for elk hunting. Those are: centerfire rifles or handguns at least 27-caliber that propel any projectiles designed to expand on impact and are at least 130 grains; shotguns at least 12-gauge; muzzleloading long-guns at least 50-caliber that propel a single projectile of at least 210 grains; crossbows with a draw weight of at least 125 pounds or less than 200 pounds (for those with required permit); bows with a draw weight of at least 45 pounds; and any arrows equipped with a broadhead that has an outside diameter or width of at least an inch and no less than two fixed, steel-cutting edges in the same plane through-

out the length of the cutting surface.

An antlered elk is defined as having "at least one spike visible above the hairline." An antlerless elk is defined as "an elk without antlers, or an elk with no spike visible above the hairline."

Successful hunters must mark the site where they harvest the elk, for both biological and law enforcement purposes. Elk hunters and those accompanying them must wear a minimum of 250 square inches of fluorescent orange material.

There will be 14 elk management areas established within the 835-square-mile elk range. Elk Management Area 15 was included to address elk conflicts outside the elk range.

No elk hunting will take place in the vicinity of the official elk viewing area on Winslow Hill, Benezet Township, Elk County. While 30 elk licenses will be made available for the upcoming season, specific allocations by elk management units will be announced later.

Commissioners also approved a measure to permit individuals, especially those who live in the elk range or are familiar with the elk herd, to serve as guides for those who receive elk licenses. Guides may provide assistance in locating or tracking elk, but may not kill any elk. Guide permits will cost \$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents, and may be obtained from the Game Commission's Harrisburg headquarters. (Game Commission employees will not serve as elk hunt guides.)

The elk hunt approved was based on a report issued by the Commission's Elk Hunt Advisory Committee, created by Executive Director Vern Ross in September of 1999. The committee included representatives of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the General Assembly, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the agricultural and tourism industries, corporate and conservation partners in the elk program, and sportsmen.

Small game, turkey and furtaking changes get final nod

THE EARLY and traditional small game hunting seasons set for 2001-02 include a nearly across-the-board expansion of hunting opportunities. Other changes were made to fall turkey hunting and beaver trapping.

New this year is that squirrels, grouse, cottontails and, in either-sex zones, pheasants will also be open from Dec. 10-24.

A proposal to add four western Pennsylvania counties — Beaver, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer — to the either-sex pheasant hunting zone did not receive final adoption. Those

four counties will remain male-pheasant only hunting counties.

Turkey Management Area 9A is closed to fall hunting this year, to give the relocated turkeys a better chance of becoming established.

Beaver limits were set according to Furbearer Management Zones as follows: Zones 1 and 2, (except McKean, Potter and Tioga counties) 20 daily and 20 for the season; Zone 2, including McKean, Potter and Tioga counties, 20 daily, 40 for the season; Zone 3, 20 daily, 40 for the season; Zones 4 and 5, 10 daily, 10

season; Zone 6, 6 daily, 6 season.

Several regulatory changes also were adopted for the beaver season. Beginning July 1, the 50-cent fee for beaver tags will be eliminated; tags will be provided at no cost. The Board preliminarily approved removing a regulation that prohibits setting traps and snares on or within 15 feet of an established beaver dam or beaver house in Furbearer Management Area 3. The prohibition would remain in place in all other furbearer management zones.

Beaver trappers will be allowed to increase the number of traps or snares to a combined total of 20, no more than 10 of which may be traps. No more than two of the traps may be body-gripping types, except in Furbearer Management Zone 3 and the counties of McKean, Potter and Tioga, where the two body-gripping trap limit does not apply. Finally, the Board discontinued a regulation that banned the use of traps with a jaw spread larger than 4½ inches on and along Pine Creek.

2001-02 Hunting Seasons and Bag Limits

Squirrels, Red, Gray, Black and Fox (Combined):

Special season for eligible junior hunters, with or without
required license

Oct. 6 & 8;

Fall Season Oct. 13–Nov. 24;

Late Season Dec. 10–Dec. 24, and Dec. 26–Feb. 9, 2002

6 daily, 12 in possession after first day

Ruffed Grouse:

Oct. 13–Nov. 24, Dec. 10–Dec. 24, and Dec. 26–Jan. 12, 2002

There is no open season for ruffed grouse in that portion of SGL 176 in Centre County that is posted "RESEARCH AREA – NO GROUSE HUNTING."

2 daily, 4 possession

Rabbit (Cottontail):

Oct. 27–Nov. 24; Dec. 10–24; and Dec. 26–Feb. 9, 2002

4 daily, 8 possession

Pheasant:

Male Only: Oct. 27–Nov. 24

Male and female in designated areas: Oct. 27–Nov. 24;
Dec. 10–24; and Dec. 26–Feb. 9, 2002

2 daily, 4 in possession

Bobwhite Quail: Oct. 27–Nov. 24

(Closed in Adams, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Fulton, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, Snyder and York counties.)

4 daily, 8 possession

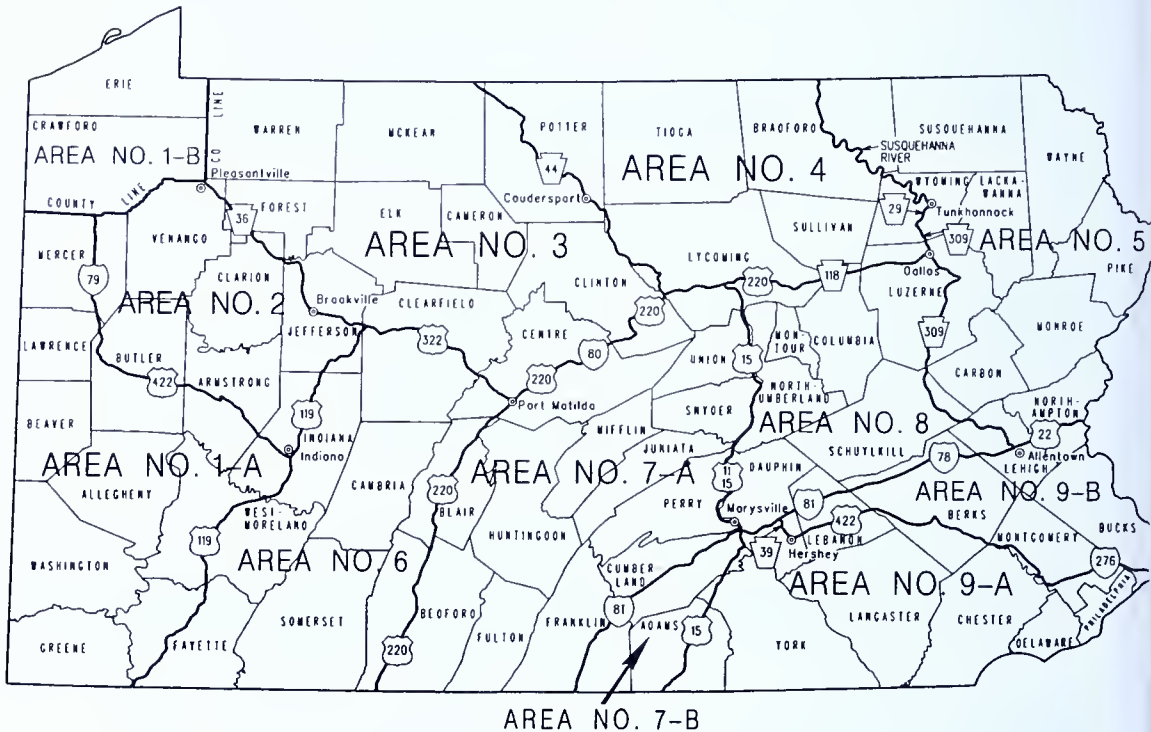
Varying (Snowshoe) Hares: Dec. 26–Jan. 1, 2002; 1 daily, 2 possession

Woodchucks (Groundhogs): No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season.

Crows: July 1–Nov. 25 and Dec. 28–April 7, 2002, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday only. No limit.

Starlings and English Sparrows: No closed season except during the antlered and antlerless deer seasons and until noon daily during the spring gobbler turkey season. No limit.

Turkey Management Areas



Wild Turkey (Male or Female): (1 bird limit, either sex)

Management Areas:

1A, 1B, 2 and 7A	Oct. 27–Nov. 10
Area 7B	Oct. 27–Nov. 3
Areas 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8	Oct. 27–Nov. 17
Area 9A	Closed
Area 9B	Oct. 27–Nov. 3

Spring Gobbler: April 27, 2002–May 25, 2002. One bearded bird only.

Black Bear: Nov. 19–Nov. 21. One per day and season.

Elk (Antlered or Antlerless): Nov. 12–Nov. 17. Daily and season limit: one. (The Executive Director is authorized to extend this season by five days, from Dec. 26–Dec. 31, and from Jan. 2, 2002–Jan. 7, 2002, excluding Sundays, if the harvest quota is not met.)

Deer, Statewide

Archery (Antlered and Antlerless): Sept 29-Nov. 10 and Dec. 26-Jan. 12, 2002. One antlered deer.** One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlered and Antlerless: Nov. 26-Dec. 8. One antlered deer.** An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlerless: Oct. 18-20. Junior and Senior License Holders, Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) holders, and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services or in the U.S. Coast Guard only, with required antlerless license. One antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlerless Flintlock: Oct. 13-20. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlered or Antlerless Flintlock: Dec. 26-Jan. 12, 2002. One antlered ** or one antlerless deer and an additional antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlerless (Military Bases): Hunting permitted on days established by the U.S. Department of the Army at Letterkenny Army Depot, Franklin County; New Cumberland Army Depot, York County; and Fort Richie, Raven Rock Site, Adams County. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Deer, Special Regulations Areas (Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties)

Archery, (no crossbows) Antlered and Antlerless : Sept. 29-Nov. 10 & Dec. 26-Jan. 12, 2002. One antlered deer.** An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

Antlered: Nov. 26-Dec. 8. One antlered deer. **

Antlerless: Nov. 26-Dec. 8 and Dec. 26 - Jan.12. An antlerless deer with each required antlerless license.

**only one antlered deer (buck) with 2 or more points to an antler or a spike 3 or more inches long, per season. Under no circumstance is any hunter entitled to take more than one antlered deer in a license year.

Furbearers, Hunting

Raccoon and Foxes: Oct. 13-Feb. 23, 2002. Unlimited

Coyote, Opossum, Skunk and Weasel: No closed season, with certain exceptions during deer and spring turkey seasons. Unlimited

Bobcat (Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3): Oct. 13-Feb. 23, 2002. One per permit. Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Harvest Permit.

Trapping

Mink and Muskrat: Nov. 17–Jan. 13, 2002. Unlimited

Coyote, Fox, Opossum, Raccoon, Skunk, Weasel: Oct. 14–Feb. 23, 2002. Unlimited.

Beaver (Statewide): Limits vary depending on Furbearer Management Zone, Dec. 26–March 31, 2002.

Bobcat (Fubearer Management Zones 2 and 3): Oct. 14–Feb. 23, 2002. One per permit. (Bobcats may be taken only by furtakers in possession of a Bobcat Harvest Permit.)

Falconry

Squirrels (Combined), quail, ruffed grouse, cottontail rabbits, snowshoe or varying hare, ring-necked pheasant (male or female combined): Sept. 1–March 31, 2002. Daily and possession limits vary.

No open season on other wild birds or mammals. Waterfowl and Migratory Game Bird seasons will be established in accordance with Federal Regulations this summer.

2001-02 Antlerless Allocation

COUNTY TREASURERS will begin accepting antlerless deer license applications through the mail from Pennsylvania residents beginning Monday, August 6. Nonresidents may apply through the mail starting Monday, August 20.

For the first round of applications for “unsold antlerless deer licenses,” county treasurers will be accepting applications from residents and nonresidents by mail on Monday, August 27.

For the second round of applications for “unsold antlerless deer licenses,” applications will be accepted beginning Monday, September 10. Watch local news media or check the Game Commission’s website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) for county availability of licenses.

Over-the-counter-sales will begin in Special Regulations Area counties

on Monday, August 27; in all other counties, where they’re still available, on Monday, November 5.

Following is the county antlerless allocation for 2001-02. Figures in parenthesis are 2000-01 allocations:

Northwest Region: Butler, 17,400 (17,600); Clarion, 9,400 (13,000); Crawford, 14,000 (17,700); Erie, 11,200 (14,400); Forest, 10,400 (13,400); Jefferson, 13,100 (10,700); Lawrence, 4,700 (5,100); Mercer, 7,200 (8,950); Venango, 12,800 (13,700); and Warren, 16,000 (18,350).

Southwest Region: Allegheny, 32,000 (30,000); Armstrong, 12,200 (16,300); Beaver, 13,000 (13,800); Cambria, 11,500 (10,250); Fayette, 12,100 (13,600); Greene, 16,800 (17,250); Indiana, 16,400 (13,500); Somerset, 12,000 (12,850); Washington, 28,600 (23,500); and

Westmoreland, 22,900 (23,250).

Northcentral Region: Cameron, 3,600 (1,400); Centre, 16,300 (16,900); Clearfield, 17,700 (15,500); Clinton, 6,000 (6,000); Elk, 7,800 (7,850); Lycoming, 15,800 (16,750); McKean, 13,100 (15,500); Potter, 14,300 (16,000); Tioga, 14,600 (19,450); and Union, 3,400 (4,650).

Southcentral Region: Adams, 12,400 (12,900); Bedford, 15,300 (20,300); Blair, 10,400 (11,700); Cumberland, 9,000 (10,500); Franklin, 9,900 (9,700); Fulton, 9,000 (11,150); Huntingdon, 17,200 (21,450); Juniata, 5,500 (6,800); Mifflin, 5,200 (7,200); Perry, 10,800 (15,600); and Snyder, 4,000 (6,100).

Northeast Region: Bradford, 20,000 (22,000); Carbon, 4,200

(5,150); Columbia, 12,300 (13,450); Lackawanna, 5,800 (3,500); Luzerne, 14,000 (10,700); Monroe, 8,000 (6,000); Montour, 2,000 (2,250); Northumberland, 7,000 (7,200); Pike, 9,500 (7,500); Sullivan, 5,300 (5,350); Susquehanna, 14,000 (8,200); Wayne, 12,600 (12,250); and Wyoming, 5,300 (4,700).

Southeast Region: Berks, 18,400 (22,000); Bucks, 20,000 (20,000); Chester, 20,000 (20,000); Dauphin, 8,500 (10,200); Delaware, 5,000 (5,000); Lancaster, 8,000 (8,000); Lebanon, 4,700 (6,850); Lehigh, 6,100 (7,150); Montgomery, 10,000 (10,000); Northampton, 7,400 (10,000); Philadelphia, 750 (750); Schuylkill, 14,700 (17,900); and York, 21,700 (23,950).

Limited bobcat season slated for 2001-02

THE BOARD of Game Commissioners approved a limited bobcat hunting and trapping season for 2001-02. The hunting season will run from Oct. 13 through Feb. 23; the trapping season is Oct. 14 through Feb. 23.

Those hunters or trappers receiving one of the limited permits through a public drawing will be restricted, like last year, to pursuing bobcats in Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3, in northcentral and northeastern Pennsylvania.

Game Commissioners also approved a change in regulations to allow bobcat permit applications to be accepted not only on a form supplied by the Game Commission, but also through an electronic application via "The Outdoor Shop" on the agency's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us).

Applications will be accepted from

residents, along with a non-refundable \$5 fee. The Board also approved an amendment to exclude from this year's drawing those hunters and trappers who received one of the 290 bobcat permits issued for the 2000-01 season.

For the 2001-02 bobcat season, applications mailed to the agency's Harrisburg headquarters must be postmarked no later than Aug. 17. The drawing for the permits will be held at the Harrisburg headquarters on Sept. 14. Also, to provide an application identifier, all applicants will be required to provide their Social Security Number.

While the agency's harvest objective remains at 175 animals, the number of bobcat permits allocated for 2001-02 will be adjusted based on last season's results and other factors.

Overcash named Law Enforcement director

DAVID E. OVERCASH has been named director of the agency's Bureau of Law Enforcement. Overcash had been serving as the bureau's acting-director since June 2000.

As Bureau of Law Enforcement director, Overcash will coordinate and oversee, along with the six regional directors and law enforcement supervisors, the enforcement activities of the Game Commission's 135 district and more than 600 deputy wildlife conservation officers.

Overcash began his career with the Game Commission in 1970, as a member of the 14th Class at the Ross Leffler School of Conservation. Upon graduation in 1971, he was assigned

as a wildlife conservation officer in southern Monroe County. In 1992, he was promoted to chief of the Bureau of Law Enforcement Technical Services Division.

A 1964 graduate of Waynesboro High School in Franklin County, Overcash attended Trenton State College in New Jersey and Mississippi State University in Jackson, Mississippi. He also is an Air Force veteran, and served during the Vietnam War.

Overcash and his wife, Patricia, currently reside in Carlisle. They have three sons: Brian of Mechanicsburg; Mark of Stroudsburg; and Erik of Newark, Delaware. They also have three grandsons.

2000: safest hunting year on record

CALENDAR year 2000 was the safest in the 86 years records have been kept. Last year, there were 69 hunting-related shooting incidents, including three fatalities. In addition, an incident rate of 6.72 per 100,000 participants also was the lowest on record.

The second safest hunting year on record was 1999, when 83 persons (including four fatalities) were struck by discharges from sporting arms. The second lowest incident rate was in 1993, when 85 persons (including four fatalities) were recorded, for an incident rate of 7.37 incidents per 100,000 hunters.

In 2000, most of the hunting-related incidents occurred during the big game seasons: wild turkey, 23; and

deer, 22. Other categories included: rabbit, 6; pheasant, 6; squirrel, 5; grouse, 4; quail, 1; dove, 1; and crow, 1.

People shot in mistake for game accounted for 21 of the hunting-related shooting incidents. Of those, 18 occurred during turkey seasons; the remainder in deer seasons.

The other most common shooting incident cause was in-line-of-fire. Of those, 12 occurred during small game seasons; five during turkey seasons; and four during deer seasons.

Other causes of shooting incidents were: unintentional discharge, 11; ricochet, 5; stray shot, 3; dropped sporting arm, 3; slipped and/or fell, 3; and sporting arm in dangerous position, 2.

Of the three fatalities in 2000, two were self-inflicted and one was inflicted by another hunter. Of the remaining 66 non-fatal incidents, 53 were inflicted by others and 13 were self-inflicted. The Game Commission has information about hunting related shooting incidents dating back to 1991 on its website, at

www.pgc.state.pa.us. Select "Hunting Information," then choose "Hunter-Trapper Education," and click on "Incident Statistics." Additionally, information on Hunter-Trapper Education and bowhunter education classes, including a county-by-county schedule, also may be viewed at the "Hunter-Trapper Education" section.

26th class of WCO trainees enrolled

THE 26th CLASS of wildlife conservation officer trainees began training at the agency's Ross Leffler School of Conservation in March. The class, comprising 21 men and two women, (selected from more than 1,000 applicants), will undergo 50 weeks of training, including field duty with veteran officers, before graduation in March 2002.

Training includes wildlife management, law enforcement, legal procedures, physical fitness, firearms proficiency, unarmed self-defense, land management, computer skills, conservation education, and public relations.

Upon graduation, each trainee will be commissioned a wildlife conservation officer and given an assignment. Following a probationary period of at least one year, the officer's performance will be evaluated and, if acceptable, he or she will be granted permanent status. Continued training will be required on a regular basis for cer-

tain skills such as firearms proficiency and legal updates. Other advanced skills training may be offered on a voluntary basis.

Officer trainees and their hometowns are: David P. Allen, Trucksville; Travis J. Anderson, Conestoga; Glen Campbell, Kutztown; Jason L. DeCoskey, Mechanicsburg; Richard A. Deiterich, Bloomsburg; Clint J. Deniker, Grove City; Chad R. Eyler, Wrightsville; Beth Ann Fife, Venetia; Scott S. Frederick, Red Lion; Amy B. Gladfelter, Huntingdon; Richard W. Joyce, Leckrone; Gerald L. Kapral, Trucksville; Kristoffer A. Krebs, Jim Thorpe; Justin T. Klugh, Dillsburg; James P. McCarthy, Hallstead; Raymond W. O'Donnell, Frackville; John M. Papson, Trumbauersville; Travis A. Pugh, Chambersburg; Daniel P. Schmidt, Tidioute; Carl M. Szymanski, Taylor; John W. Veylupek, Pittsburgh; Timothy L. Wenrich, Ashland; and Jonathan S. Zuck, Elizabethtown.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Crossbows approved for limited use in Special Regulations Areas

HUNTERS will be allowed to use crossbows in Special Regulations Areas during the upcoming regular firearms deer season (Nov. 26-Dec. 8, and Dec. 26-Jan. 12). Special Regulations Areas counties are Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia.

“The Game Commission believes it should move cautiously in an effort to incorporate the use of crossbows in our deer hunting seasons, so we can measure what impact, if any, crossbow hunters may have on the resource,” said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. “Special Regulations Areas serve as fine testing grounds for the crossbow because they demand short-range sporting arms and have excessive deer populations. Our greatest interest now is measuring what type of following the crossbow attracts. Determining that will help guide us in future crossbow-hunting decisions.”

Under the new regulation, a crossbow is defined as: “A device consisting of a bow fixed transversely on a stock, the string of which is released by a trigger mechanism, has a mechanical safety and propels an arrow.” The new regulation also requires crossbows used for deer hunting to have a draw weight of not less than 125 pounds nor more than 200 pounds.

Previously, only hunters with permanent disabilities, and a permit from the Game Commission, could use crossbows. However, Act 111, approved by the General Assembly and signed by Gov. Tom Ridge at the end of 2000, removed crossbows from the list of unlawful devices and methods for hunting in the Game and Wildlife Code. The new law also allows hunters with temporary disabilities to apply for a permit to use a crossbow throughout the state for up to one year.

Illegal elk killing under investigation

THE GAME Commission is seeking any information regarding the illegal killing of a bull elk in the Spruce Run Road area, almost a mile from Route 477 in Lamar Township, Clinton County.

The elk was found on April 1 and reported to Deputy WCO Pete Dersham. WCO Kenneth Packard, who is heading up the investigation, noted that the elk was found in the same vicinity where, over the past five years, three bears have been illegally killed.

“In each of these cases — the re-

cently killed elk and the three dead bears — we found the same thing: Nothing was done to the animals other than fatal bullet wounds,” Packard said. “We are hoping that we can get more information about this recent incident, so we can possibly bring an end to this senseless killing.”

According to Packard’s investigation, the elk was killed several days prior to being found.

The 2½-year-old elk weighed about 600 pounds, with 5x6 antlers. It was part of the trap-and-transfer elk release in Hevner Run, Clinton

County, in 1999.

Anybody with any information is encouraged to call the Game Commission's toll-free TIP Hotline at

1-888-PGC-8001, or the Northcentral Region Office toll-free at 1-877-877-7674. Of course, confidentiality will be maintained.

Middle Creek & Pymatuning programs

AN EXCITING lineup of programs is on tap at the Middle Creek and Pymatuning wildlife management areas this month.

On June 6-7, Dick Brown, Middle Creek Bluebird Project Coordinator, conducts his program on bluebirds.

June 20-21, Jim Binder, Middle Creek manager, explains how Middle Creek came to be, what is there, and how the Game Commission is working to provide for wildlife.

The programs are free and begin at 7:30 p.m. The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County.

At Pymatuning on June 9, "Attracting Wildlife To Your Own Backyard." Meet the master of wildlife attractors, Jerry Hassinger, PGC biologist. Jerry will fill you with ideas

you can easily apply to any backyard. Also, view the attractors in place at the Wildlife Learning Center. (What had been the Pymatuning visitors center has been renamed the Wildlife Learning Center, to more accurately reflect the programs and services offered at the facility.)



June 23, "Birds Of Prey." WCO

Mario Piccirilli will

be on hand to separate fact from fantasy about Pennsylvania's many birds of prey. Be prepared to dig into owl pellets.

June 30, Mark Ternent, PGC wildlife biologist will present "The Bear Facts," an informative program about this increasingly common animal.

Programs are free at Pymatuning. They start at 2 p.m. and are held at the Wildlife Learning Center located near Linesville, Crawford County.

In appreciation for his 15 years of service, particularly in establishing regulations and standards governing wildlife rehabilitation. DR. WILBUR AMAND, right, Chairman of the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Council, was recently presented a Game Commission Working Together for Wildlife print by DAVE OVERCASH, left, the new PGC Director of the Bureau of Law Enforcement.



25-Year Club

David H. Hummel
Surveyor
Pitman

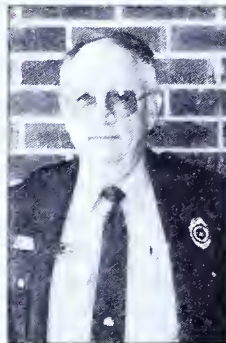


The Game Commission enjoys a tremendous spirit of dedication among its employees. Here are the most recent PGC employees to complete a quarter century of service.

Michael W. Schmit
Deputy Executive
Director
Fleetwood



Elwood L. Camp
Wildlife Conservation
Officer
Ulysses

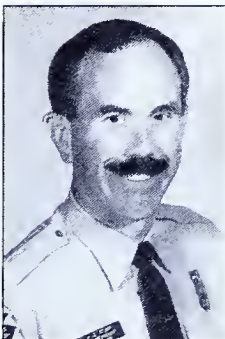


Timothy O. Bowers
Game Lands
Maintenance Supervisor
Dillsburg



William Wasserman
Wildlife Conservation
Officer
Tunkhannock

Alan C. Scott
Wildlife Conservation
Officer
Rural Valley



Warren Q. Stump
Law Enforcement
Supervisor
Northcentral Region
Bellefonte



John Wasserman
Wildlife Conservation
Officer
Renovo



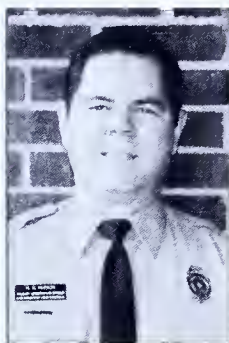
Leonard C. Hribar
Wildlife Conservation
Officer
Oil City

William P. Anderson
Federal Aid Supervisor
Northwest Region
Tidioute



John A. Shutter
WCO Law Enforcement
Coordinator
Lancaster

Rickie D. Hixson
Land Management
Officer
Beech Creek



Wayne C. Wall
Game Lands
Maintenance Supervisor
Cogan Station



Willis A. Sneath
Southcentral Region
Director
Alexandria



Barry J. Seth
Wildlife Conservation
Officer
Worthington



Donald C. Parr
Federal Aid Supervisor
Huntingdon

Also attaining 25 years of service are Timothy L. Flanigan, Wildlife Conservation Officer, Bedford; Barry L. Harshbarger, Game Lands Maintenance Worker, Burlington; Philip J. Lukish, Wildlife Conservation Officer, Alexandria; David G. Ochenis, Administrative Officer, Hummelstown; Steve A. Smithonic Jr., Federal Aid Supervisor, West Pittston; Greg A. Williard, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor, Elizabethville; Dale A. Zimmerman, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor, Jonestown.

Another View

By Linda Steiner

Downtime for a die-hard hunter just doesn't happen; not a day goes by that he or she isn't at least thinking about hunting. Here are some ideas for . . .

What to Do When You Can't Go Hunting

EARLY SUMMER is a frustrating time for hunters. Spring gobbler season ended in late May, and groundhog hunting is a month or so away, as most hunters wait until the young woodchucks are old enough to be on their own and the hayfields have been cut. So what to do in the lull, when you're not hunting?

For most of us hunting is a part of life that can't be switched on and off. When a person is a hunter, he or she is a hunter full-time. That portion of the self is always there to be exercised and is often at the forefront of what to do today, which is why there is a problem. Just what do you do when you can't go hunting?

Reading about it comes to mind. Sure, it's summer and you don't want to be indoors reading, but sometimes being inside can't be helped. What if rain beats on the windows, maybe accompanied by thunder and lightning? Even if the lights go out you can read about hunting the old-fashioned way, by candlelight or kerosene lantern. Or maybe you're in the house because there is too much sun and you're still getting over yesterday's burn. Ease back in the chair carefully — ouch! — and read in front of the air conditioner or where there's a cool breeze. Or read about hunting outdoors — under a shade tree lakeside or at the beach.

Summer vacation reading may be the most enjoyable of the year, because you do it for pure pleasure. Make your take-along book this vacation one about your favorite activity.

What kind of reading is available about hunting? In books, there are classics to be explored, old and new — Jack O'Connor for around-the-world hunting adventure; Larry Koller for white-tailed deer; Gene Hill for the gentleman's game bird; Peter Hathaway Capstick for you-are-there African safaris. Read stories of the hunt from great storytellers who will make you remember why you went hunting in the first place, and affirm why you keep at it.

Read about hunting this summer to learn something new. The best where-to, how-to stories are also good reading, if the writer is skillful, but even the worst can be worthwhile if the information is valuable. The latter are just harder to wade through. Read now, in this lull, so you'll be ready to try a new facet of hunting in the fall.

Never muzzleloader hunted before? With expanding black powder opportunities in the state, this is a good year to find out something about this antique way of shooting. It's still effective and it's fun. Right now you have time to read about flintlock hunting, firearms and other black

powder equipment and decide what you want to buy. Will a 50-caliber or 54-caliber be best for you? Do you want a long rifle or a carbine? Will you use maxi-balls or round balls? What are the tricks to minimizing or eliminating lag time between primer burn and the gun going off? Research it now and you'll have the rest of the summer to get as familiar with this firearm as you are with your trusty .30-06.

Or maybe you've always wanted to expand your hunting horizons to grouse or finally get serious about bagging a bear. Read about it, about successful hunters' experiences and tips for success, and about the animal itself. What little sound does a grouse make before it flushes? Just how good is a bear's sense of smell? You might figure out the answer during hunting season, but by knowing the answer from your summer reading, you'll be a step ahead in putting that knowledge to work for you as a hunter.

I also like my summer reading to include books or magazines about new places I either plan to hunt or might get around to hunting some day. The where-to might give me solid information that I intend to use this year — deer in the Adirondacks — or it could just be the stuff of dreams — like trophy moose in the Yukon.

Right at home, Pennsylvania's hunting terrains offer different experiences for the same game animal. Shooting a deer on a rocky mountaintop and along a flatland farm field are both accomplishments not to be missed in your hunting career. Find out about new spots to hunt in state through your summer reading, and make definite plans to go there, including locating lodging and camping facilities.

Digesting books and magazines can enhance or change your hunting life, but if you have a home com-

puter connected to the Internet, or your air-conditioned local library has one for public use, click onto the World Wide Web for reading about hunting. More websites exist about hunting than you'll ever get a chance to visit. Just try "hunting" in one of the search engines and see how many thousands of listings you get. Go to one and you can often link to related subjects, getting deeper and deeper in your favorite or a new type of hunting.

You can visit the home page of every state by typing in [www.state.\(insert two-letter abbreviation of state name\).us](http://www.state.(insert two-letter abbreviation of state name).us). For example, Pennsylvania's homepage is at www.state.pa.us. Then move around on the site until you find hunting information, usually under a recreation heading or under the state government's wildlife department.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission's website is at www.pgc.state.pa.us. I visit it often for great stuff on wildlife, latest news, answers to frequently asked questions about hunting and the game law, and lots more. You can even buy *Game News* and next season's hunting license online.

At some websites, you can easily e-mail an inquiry, so if you don't find the information you're looking for on the homepage, just ask and they'll e-mail you back. When I needed to know more, I got detailed information in return to queries

WHEN YOU can't go hunting try a hike. You might learn something new about wildlife or a new place to hunt.



Bob Steiner

to West Virginia and Missouri, plus they “snail-mailed” me maps and guidebooks to look over at my summer leisure. Try connecting to state, county or regional tourism departments, too, via the Internet. Sometimes they will call you back over the phone and you can chat — make sure you leave your number and regular mailing address, as well as your e-mail address.

Don’t always stay indoors this month, just because you’re not going hunting. The season is always open for hiking. Any time you’re in the outdoors, you’re likely to see something that will be useful the next time you do go hunting. Peering into overhead branches, you may see them full of just-forming acorns. You’ll know to come back to this oak patch in October.

Wildlife is still out there and ready to continue your hunter’s education in their ways and wiles. The young-of-the-year you see on your walks will help indicate whether next hunting season will be a game-filled or game-scarce one. Hike to locate new places to hunt and to find out what’s happened since last hunting season in the places you know you’ll hunt again. You’ll need a little more bug repellent and sunscreen this time of year, though.

What else can you do when you can’t go hunting? Visit a sporting goods store and buy that new rifle, shotgun or bow now, or take your current firearms or bow to the range. Fewer months remain for practicing at the range before next hunting season than you think. Take a buddy or a group of friends or go alone for more serious marksmanship, but go. Spend a lot of time this summer with your .22. The rimfire will show you a lot about your shooting form and follow-through, without the punishing noise or shoulder-push, and the ammo is much more economical than the bigger calibers.

Contact landowners about hunting their property later on . . . refinish your gunstock . . . reload shells or fletch arrows . . . mount the buck antlers from last season on a plaque . . . put the photos of 2000’s game in your scrapbook . . . or catch up after a decade of procrastination and finally buy that hunting memories scrapbook. The list of things to do when you can’t go hunting goes on and on, but the most important of all is this: Get your household fix-ups and yard chores done now, so when the time comes to go hunting — you can. □

Days of Yore



THIS PHOTO was taken on the opening day of deer season in 1940 along Route 6 in Potter County. It’s not known as God’s Country for nothing.

Seldom seen but unmistakably heard, this bird's 3-note plaintive song in the spring and summer is legendary.

Return of the Whip-poor-wills

I REMEMBER 1976 and 1977 as whip-poor-will years. That was when a whip-poor-will adopted our home grounds as part of his territory, singing at dusk and dawn on our driveway and around both the guesthouse and main house. Several times our eldest son, Steve, and I sneaked down for a glimpse, but all we saw was a dark, shadowy figure that took off with a soft *chuck, chuck* whenever we came close.

One evening, in mid-May, we were nearly blasted out of our living room by a singing whip-poor-will. Steve skulked out the dining room door and crept around the back of the house, but as he neared the back porch, the whip-poor-will flew from the steps. That was as close as he came to our home. After that, he sang from below the back

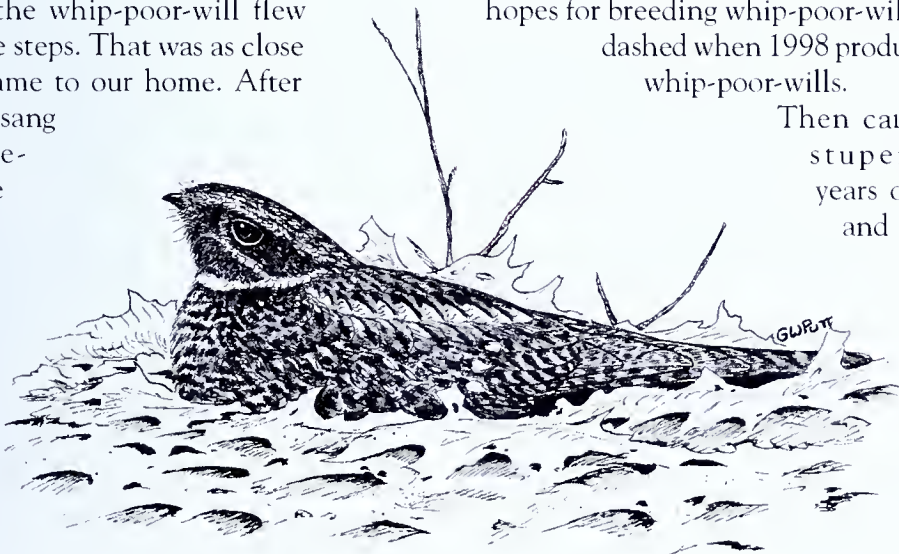
step as well as outside the guesthouse during his half hour dusk and dawn rounds.

The singing whip-poor-will had thrilled my father-in-law, who had moved to our guesthouse. To him, the whip-poor-will song was the essence of wildness.

Pop died in March of 1978 and with him went the whip-poor-will. Except for one that sang on April 29, 1989, we didn't hear another whip-poor-will until early May 1996 when our son Dave, who now lives in the guesthouse, heard one singing on two different evenings.

The following year Dave heard one outside the guesthouse on May 20 and another down in the hollow on June 10, but our hopes for breeding whip-poor-wills were dashed when 1998 produced no whip-poor-wills.

Then came the stupendous years of 1999 and 2000. I



could finally say that after 22 years breeding whip-poor-wills were back. Beginning on April 29, 1999, when a whip-poor-will sang at 1 a.m., it sang most evenings and early mornings until June 1 along the same circuit — from outside our house, down to the guesthouse stone wall, and then to the edge of the woods. In 2000, he started on May 3 and again continued until June 1 around our home grounds. Another one sang half a mile away near the spruce grove.

Many mornings I was awakened between 5 and 5:15 a.m. when he sang outside my bedroom window. One hot, humid evening he sang so loudly I could hear him above the highest setting on my fan. That was when he sang 100 “whip-poor-wills” in succession, the most I had ever recorded, although naturalist John Burroughs, back in the late nineteenth century, counted a record 1,088.

Both years, our whip-poor-wills resumed singing for a few evenings in early July. Of course, describing the loud, repetitive *whip-poor-will* as a song seems a bit far-fetched, but the male uses it to mark his territory and attract a mate, just as songbirds do.

Once a female heeds his song and lands near him, he stops singing, faces her, and slowly walks toward her, raising his body as high as he can with each step. Then he circles her while she bobs slowly up and down, emitting purring and popping sounds.

In another courtship display, the female lands and responds to his song with a grunting *gaw-gaw-gaw*. Next, she lowers her head and trembles violently as the male sidles up to her and touches her bill. This causes her to move slowly away, followed by the male. Then he moves away, followed by her. This back and forth courtship can go on for several minutes.

Still a third courtship display occurs when the female lands on the ground below a male singing on a branch, spreads her wings and tail, lowers her head, and sidesteps back and forth, halfway to the right and then the left, in a dance that lasts

for 15 minutes. All the while she dances, she utters guttural chuckling sounds.

Watching the courtship of whip-poor-wills is not easy because they wait until it is almost dark, so the three courtship techniques described have rarely been witnessed.

Most people are only familiar with the whip-poor-will’s song, which he sings from favorite song-posts such as boulders, stone walls, buildings or the ground at dawn and dusk and sometimes throughout moonlit nights. In Pennsylvania whip-poor-wills appear as early as the second week in April, but more commonly from the last week in April to the third in May.

Once a couple is mated, the female lays no more than two glossy white eggs, sometimes spotted with gray or lilac, on the ground in leaf-litter. She often chooses a spot near or beside a fallen log in open woodland. Whip-poor-wills depend on their mottled, grayish-brown color to camouflage them when the female incubates the eggs during the day while the male roosts nearby. At dusk or shortly thereafter, the male takes over incubation until the female returns during the night. Then they share incubation duties until the female resumes incubating the rest of the night and the following day.

After between 19 and 21 days of incubation, the eggs hatch into cinnamon fuzz balls able to move in short hops soon after emerging. Usually the female broods them during the day unless they have two families in one season. Then the male broods the chicks while the female lays and incubates a second clutch of eggs.

Sometimes a female is flushed from the chicks during the day. The chicks move off in opposite directions and remain motionless while the female performs one of three possible distraction displays: She may fly around the nest, giving *chuck* calls of distress; feign injury by fluttering around on the ground, calling, shivering her wings, and shaking her body; or fly up and perch on a branch and continually shift her posi-

tion, this time calling a soft *quirt-quirt*.

Males will also perform distraction displays if they are brooding the young, as central Pennsylvania writer Charles Fergus discovered when he and his neighbor found a brooding male. "... the adult bird gasped and muttered. Flying toward us, it landed with tail spread and wings askew, as if wounded. Its white outer tail feathers identified the bird as a male [females have buff-colored tail feathers] . . . The whip-poor-will half ran, half flew away. He chuckled pitifully, his voice trailing off in a squeal. Again he flew in close, again he scrambled away," Fergus wrote in an article in *Country Journal* magazine.

Both parents feed the chicks at night by regurgitation. They fledge at 15 days and are independent after 30 days, although they may still take food from their parents.

Whip-poor-wills are "lunarphilic," which means they are more active when the moon is bright. They even seem to time the hatching of their chicks to a waxing moon so they can see more easily to catch, mostly on the wing, the large moths — ce-cropia, luna and polyphemus, as well as tussock and tent caterpillar moths, which they especially favor. They also like mosquitoes, grasshoppers, crickets, beetles and ants.

Calm, warm, moonlit nights encourage them to sing throughout the night instead of their usual dusk and dawn routine, but once their young hatch, they stop singing except for an occasional outburst. Those males without mates continue singing, so I can assume that "our" whip-poor-wills successfully bred.

Whip-poor-wills often return year after

year to the same nesting spot. They are woodland birds that especially favor oak/pine forests interspersed with grassy old fields or other openings throughout their range of most of the United States and southern Canada, south through Mexico and Central America to Costa Rica.

First named *Caprimulgus vociferus*, referring to its membership in the goatsucker family and its loud song, by Pennsylvania

ornithologist/artist Alexander

Wilson in 1812, whip-

poor-wills were once common throughout

the state. But ornithologist W.E.C.

Todd noted a decline as early as

1940 and during Pennsylvania's

atlas of breeding birds in the

1980s, whip-poor-wills were found in

only 17 percent of the commonwealth. Today,

they breed mostly in the

open, wooded areas of the ridge-

and-valley province, the Poconos, and southwestern Pennsylvania.

Studying whip-poor-wills, though, is difficult because of their crepuscular and nocturnal lifestyle. Back in 1997, Robert Criswell of the Game Commission and Chuck Yohn of Juniata College conducted a whip-poor-will calling survey in southcentral Pennsylvania. We reported our two whip-poor-wills and learned that altogether whip-poor-wills were reported from 27 separate sites in seven counties and that our county, Blair, had had the most sites at nine.

Last year, a Pennsylvania Breeding Survey of the northern saw-whet owl, funded by the PGC, yielded incidental information on breeding whip-poor-wills. On 100 routes throughout the state covered after dark from late April until mid-June, observers counted 147 whip-poor-wills on 28



routes. According to the Pennsylvania Society of Ornithology Newsletter, “with several birds calling at some points, observers may have underestimated whip-poor-will numbers due to auditory confusion.”

Just why whip-poor-wills have declined in the state is not clear, although researchers have suggested that habitat destruction, problems on their wintering grounds in the southern United States, Mexico and central America, or the effects of pesticides on the insects they prey on may explain the loss.

Less than two centuries ago whip-poor-wills sang in the heart of Philadelphia. Alexander Wilson wrote, “The whip-poor-will was first heard this season [1811] on the 2nd day of May, in a corner of Mr. Bartram’s woods, not far from the house, and for two or three mornings after in the same place, where I also saw it . . . ” Mr.

Bartram was naturalist/writer William Bartram who lived in the then bucolic environs of southwestern Philadelphia along the Schuylkill River.

Today whip-poor-wills are gone, not only from Philadelphia County but Chester County where it was once relatively common. The Pittsburgh area is similarly bereft of whip-poor-wills. The late Carsten Ahrens, writing in *Game News* back in 1981, recalled moving to a hill above a wooded ravine in Pittsburgh in 1941 and hearing a whip-poor-will all season. But it was “a call that no longer resounds in our ravine. The woodland down there has become a housing project,” he wrote.

As we pave over more and more of the state, the whip-poor-will retreats to less populated areas. There its whistled song continues to strike a thrill into every listener’s heart. □

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Straight from the Bowstring

By Tom Tatum

For the bowhunter looking for an edge, understanding the vocabulary of the white-tailed deer, with all of its subtle nuances, can provide that extra advantage.

Talk the Talk



MOST BOWHUNTERS today incorporate calling and/or rattling into their hunting routine at some point in the season.

LATE AFTERNOON was drifting into twilight on the final day of the 1982 archery season. It was the end of October in those years, when Pennsylvania's bowhunting season traditionally ended just as the whitetail rut was getting under way. As was my usual fate in those days, I hadn't filled my archery tag. I really hadn't seen much deer activity all season. I was just about to start that long, last climb down from my treestand when I heard it for the first time. To me it sounded like a series of guttural burps resonating steadily through the woodlot, and then a buck appeared out

of the shadows and plodded toward me at an angle that would take him past my stand at 30 yards. The 8-point continued to grunt at measured intervals, and already at full draw, I waited for him to pause. When he did, I released the arrow. The 30 yards turned out to be 38, and the broadhead dipped just below the deer's brisket. The buck bolted, then stopped, looked back, and continued along his sauntering, grunting way. I didn't fill my tag that year, but I had experienced, firsthand, and for the first time, the vocalizations of a rutting buck.

Fast-forward 10 years. Again I'm perched in a treestand — this time waiting for daylight in the pre-dawn darkness. It's the first week of November 1992 and in the intervening 10 years things in the Keystone State have changed for archers in two significant ways. First of all, the season now stretches into the first half of November. This means that in most years, at least, bowhunters have the opportunity to hunt bucks in the pre-rut and rut. Translation: More archers are filling their tags. Secondly, whitetail vocalizations have come under extraordinary scrutiny, and products capitalizing on these studies have exploded onto the market.

So this morning I'm armed not only with my archery tackle, but with a grunt call as well, an instrument that perfectly mimics those same measured guttural burps

DAVE McINTYRE, below, demonstrates the Posi-Call, a deer call developed with the help of a computer. FRED ABBAS, right, demonstrates the advantage of a hands-free call.



I first heard 10 years before. As soon as it's light enough to shoot, I take my call and produce three loud grunts that pierce the morning stillness with a whitetail challenge. The tone of these particular grunts is pitched to resemble that of a young buck foolish enough to announce his presence — what most experts would characterize as a social or curiosity grunt. If the tone stretches too deeply into baritone or bass, I could frighten off all but the alpha buck in the territory. I wait a few minutes, and then sound the same three notes.

Almost immediately a tangle of honeysuckle growing on a pin oak sapling suddenly quakes. I assume it's a leaping squirrel, but then a buck appears, embodied out of the mist and strides confidently toward me. He has answered my grunted challenge. At only five yards, from up in my treestand, the shot is close but steep. I make it, and within the hour I've collected and tagged my buck, all the while wishing I had known about the potential magic of calling deer that evening 10 years before.

Now, just like most modern bowhunters, I have a vast arsenal of calls and sound devices included in my bowhunting inven-

tory, but I've also discovered that grunt calls, along with other vocalizations and rattling, tend to be situational in terms of their effectiveness.

Why is it that on some occasions a buck will throw caution to the wind and come directly to a call like an animal possessed? At other times a buck will barely flick his ear at your best calling efforts. In many cases, it all depends on the situation. A buck on the trail of a hot doe (which you may not have seen) is going to ignore you and your call no matter how convincing it might sound. A buck intent on making his rounds while visiting scrapes is also likely to ignore you. Some bowhunters contend that it is also more difficult to entice bucks with calls in areas (like most of Pennsylvania) where the doe population vastly outnumbered the bucks, resulting in little competition for receptive does. In areas where the buck:doe ratio is more balanced, grunting and other forms of calling can be expected to produce better results.

A great way to get acquainted with the latest calling techniques and find out about the most recent innovations in call technology is to spend some time at sportsmen

shows. These events provide awesome opportunities to talk with hunting experts who represent companies that manufacture deer calls. With that in mind, I took advantage of this year's show in Harrisburg to investigate the current state of deer calls and calling.

Don Small of Penn's Woods Game Calls of Delmont, Pennsylvania explained one variation on the grunt call. The "Easy Squeeze" deer call is essentially a tube call attached to a rubber bladder. To initiate a grunt sound you squeeze the air out of the bladder, then release the pressure. As the bladder re-inflates, it sucks in air and produces the grunt sounds. For hands-free operation it can attach to the base of your treestand, where it can be operated with pressure from your foot. Like many modern calls, the tone of this call can be adjusted by moving a sliding O-ring, enabling it to produce fawn and doe bleats or yearling or dominant buck grunts. Like many other companies, Penn's Woods also sells traditional tube calls and rattling bags.

H and M Archery of Ypsilanti, Michigan, also has a variation on the grunt call theme. They produce a call that is attached to a 14-foot tube and can be extended for as far as 45 feet with additional 12-foot sections. The purpose of these extensions is to let the grunt call hang down to the ground from treestand height until it's at

the deer's ear level. The theory here is that a mature deer will get suspicious of a deer grunting up in the treetops. This makes sense to me because I have had deer grow wary of me while grunting at heights of 25 feet or more. I suspect this becomes more of a problem the closer a buck approaches, but the extension tube addresses this. If you think you've never spooked a buck with high altitude calling, it may be because he shied away long before you ever saw him.

Scientific research continues to refine the quality of deer calls. Dave McIntyre of Posi-Call, Inc. has perfected the Posi-Call by running recordings of actual whitetail vocalizations through a computer, then designing the call's plate "so that we can reproduce the frequency of the whitetail deer. It's multi-tone, reproducing bleats and grunts. We call it the Posi-Call because it gives positive tone every time." McIntyre used the call to demonstrate an identifying grunt, short, low and pig-like, which is used by both bucks and does. Next in his repertoire was a long, drawn-out grunt, used by a buck when pleading for the doe to stand. Finally McIntyre imitated the hyperventilating click, an unusual sound made by a buck when he is sucking in air and scenting estrus.

Also on hand at the show was world champion deer caller Gary Sefton from Franklin, Tennessee, with the Woods Wise Company. Sefton has taken dozens of bucks with his bow. "Early in the season you can use buck grunts to peak social curiosity," he said. "As the rut approaches, though, you use a doe bleat. Horn rattling is also more effective prior to the rut. Deer grunts, bleats and snorts used in varying degrees of volume and intensity mean different things. The trick to call-



THERE is no shortage of deer calls on the market today. Here are just a few.

ing deer is knowing what to say and when to say it."

Chris Cartwright and Kenneth Lancaster of the Primos Pro Staff displayed a variety of state-of-the-art grunt calls at the Primos booth. Typical of most modern manufacturers, Primos produces a multiple purpose call, in this case a six in one call which imitates various degrees of grunting and bleating, including attention grunts and tending grunts. Lancaster has taken five Pope and Young bucks, three of them by calling. "The most productive time to call is during the rut using grunt and bleat calls in combination," Lancaster says. "A lot of times you can grunt a deer in to get his attention, then start bleating and throw in a few grunts to sound like a buck chasing a doe — that's what I have the most success with." Lancaster has appeared in videos where he has arrowed deer in Primos's "The Truth" series as well as in the television series, "The Truth about Hunting."

Another familiar video personality at the show was Noel Feathers. Feathers' original claim to hunting fame was his success with rattling deer in to bow range. He's killed three Boone and Crockett bucks in his home state of Illinois using rattling techniques, but he is also an advocate of calling. "Anybody can rattle a buck in," says Feathers. "Too many people rattle too often and too fast. I like to grind the horns rather than hitting them together. I use grunt calls a lot — they're just as effective as rattling — if the deer can hear it. A buck can hear rattling for a quarter mile on a still morning. As a rule of thumb, I'd say use the grunt call first, then, if there's no response, rattle, but chances are you won't need to."

One popular trend right now is the move to "hands-free" calls and smaller calling devices. Typical of these is the "Bowhunter Plus," a hands-free call developed by Fred Abbas of A Way Hunting Products in Beaverton, Michigan. This call clips to your collar or hat with a tube that

extends toward your mouth so that all you have to do is turn your head to access the mouthpiece. Abbas believes he has developed the perfectly toned social/curiosity call. Like most modern calls, this call adjusts to mimic fawns, does, young bucks and dominant bucks.

Taking the miniaturization process even further is the Micro-Grunter Deer Call developed by Paul and Tim Lenartz of Alto, Michigan. At two inches in length, the Lenartz call is a little smaller than a nail clipper. It is also designed to clip onto the hunter's hat or vest to provide hands-free operation. The Micro-Grunter is capable of calls ranging from bleats to grunts. To operate the call, the hunter should inhale, a technique that minimizes moisture and prevents the reed from freezing up. Because of its small size and limited volume, this call is intended, as Lenartz says, "for working deer in close."

Calls on the market today are intended to help hunters capitalize on what we've discovered about deer vocalizations over the past 20 years. The more we have learned, the more sophisticated and exacting calls and calling techniques have become. A generation ago, few if any hunters were even aware that whitetail deer communicated by vocalizing (with the exception of the dreaded warning snort, that is). Later we discovered that deer bleat and grunt. Now we know that there are many variations on these sounds that can range from social grunts to estrus bleats to breeding bellows. Tomorrow may uncover still more intricacies about the whitetail's language.

For the bowhunter looking for an edge, understanding the vocabulary of the whitetailed deer with all of its subtle nuances can provide that advantage. Sure, you might score on a buck next year with sheer dumb luck and a sour note or two, but if you really expect to fill your tag consistently, you need to learn to speak the whitetail's language; you need to talk the talk. □

The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

For many, hunting groundhogs means shooting them at long distances. Here's a rundown of which calibers are best suited for the varying ranges you're likely to encounter whistlepigs.

Varmint Cartridges

THE CHUCK was feeding in high grass at the base of an old apple tree, apparently oblivious to a heavy rain that was starting to soak through the light jacket I was wearing. I gave serious consideration to calling a halt to this hunt and wait for another day, but this would be the first shot from a new Model 43 Winchester .22 Hornet I had recently purchased. I decided to wait and hope for a clear shot.

It was approximately 225 yards to the chuck, which was a long shot for open sights. I had a makeshift crossed-fork rest that was more of a liability than an asset, and when the chuck stopped in a fairly open spot, I fired. The chuck jumped and

ran a yard or so before stopping. I shot again, but all it did was send the chuck racing to its den. As often happens, though, the chuck paused before going in. My third shot hit the den mound in front of the chuck and the dirt spray sent it instantly underground.

Even though I was pretty well soaked by this time, I still walked to the old orchard to see exactly where my third shot had hit. I found the plowed furrows of the first two shots and the third shot struck well down on the mound. It was obvious that I either misjudged the distance or that my sight picture was not right for that distance. When conditions got better later in the week, I nailed the chuck

Helen Lewis



DON LEWIS takes his groundhog hunting seriously. One of his favorite varmint rifles is this .22 BR Remington wildcat. The stock is a H-S Precision Target Silhouette thumbhole and scope is a 6-24x Bausch & Lomb. The .22 BR Remington's case is made by necking down a Remington 6mm BR factory case.

from a distance of about 145 yards. I didn't have a 100-yard range in those days, but a dozen shots from my 50-yard setup helped me get a new sight adjustment.

This might seem like poor shooting, but the error was not so much in the sight picture as it was in not understanding the trajectory of the .22 Hornet. This episode probably took place in 1950, shortly after the Model 43 Winchester was introduced, and there was not much data on trajectories back then.

After returning from 3½ years in the military, I used a Model 511 Remington Scoremaster .22 rimfire for chucks. Most of my shots were under 75 yards, and I mistakenly believed the .22 Hornet, with its 2,650 feet per second muzzle velocity, would be just as flat shooting at 200 yards as the .22 rimfire rig was at 50 yards. That belief was soon dispelled after many misses at long range and a thorough study of a factory trajectory chart. I finally came to my senses and realized the .22 Hornet was more at home at 150 yards than the super long ranges. Fortune smiled on me when I had an opportunity to trade the Model 43 for a Model 722 Remington .222 topped with an 8x Unertl varmint scope.

The .222 cartridge changed my philosophy on varmint shooting. With its inherent accuracy, bullet placement was possible beyond 200 yards. Along with handloading and a great deal of range testing, I began to put the emphasis on where the bullet struck instead of just hitting anywhere in a fatal area. In other words, precise shooting at 200 yards brought more satisfaction than making an occasional kill at distances beyond 350 yards.

My brother Dan was an avid chuck hunter who ate most of the chucks I shot. His method of hunting was to get close to a den and wait for the chuck to surface. He had total faith in his Mossberg .22. It was all he needed. After a month of listening to me telling about 250-yard shots, he wanted to see the .222 in action. We drove into a lane along the edge of a pasture and

saw a chuck dive into its den some 40 yards away. Seconds later, the chuck's head appeared. Dan started to open the car door. "What are you doing?" he asked, when I backed the car out of the field.

"I'm going to the other end of the field for a longer shot," I answered.

"That's the dumbest thing I ever heard," he said. "Why drive a half mile out of your way when you have a perfect shot right here?"

"Now the action begins," I said after parking the car and setting up my shooting rest. "The chuck will be back out in a matter of minutes."

"There's something out by the den, but it's so far away it might be a mouse!" Dan exclaimed.

I aligned the crosswire of the 8x Unertl on the chuck's ribcage and touched off a shot. The echo of a bullet hitting floated back. "I nailed him, Dan. That's what you call precision shooting."

"How do you know? The bullet hasn't gotten there yet," he fired back.

After looking the chuck over, Dan said he didn't want to get involved in long range shooting because the meat would spoil before the chuck could be retrieved.

Back in the 1930s when the .22 Hornet ruled the roost in the chuck hunting realm, the 23D Savage was a favorite with varmint shooters. In the late 1930s, the 23D Savage topped with a 3x Weaver 29S scope was considered the ultimate varmint rig. My 23D Savage Hornet topped with a 29S scope was given to me about 30 years ago by a disgusted hunter who said it was inaccurate and the poorest excuse for a varmint rifle he had ever seen.

He was right about the accuracy part. The 23D printed 3-inch groups at a 100 yards with new factory cartridges. Then it struck me that the early .22 Hornets had a .223 bore diameter, and the 23D Savage is from that era. I loaded a dozen rounds with .223 Sierra bullets and the accuracy improved dramatically. To this day, however, I have never measured the bore diameter,

so I really don't know for sure that it's .223, but I do know the smaller diameter bullet is more accurate.

We tend to think of varmint shooting as always being at long range. To some degree that is true, but it also depends on what each hunter considers long range. The 23D Savage user considered 200 yards as really reaching out. It was long range compared to the .22 rimfire's 75-yard limit. Remington's .222 cartridge added a new dimension to long range. The super accurate .222 was just as effective at 250 as the .22 Hornet was at 150. The old .220 Swift has "finally overcome all the bad (and mostly false) publicity it endured for years and is now recognized as a super long range varmint cartridge. The .220 Swift is right at home out to 450 yards when it doesn't have to buck a strong crosswind. I shot a Swift in a field that measured just under 500 yards and located the bullet holes between 440 and 465 yards (measured with a steel tape) from where I was shooting. I used 52-grain match bullets in the .220 and scored many times when there was little wind.

Although I'm a strong advocate for the .224-caliber for varmints, I also realize that the 6mms with their heavier bullets are better suited for shots beyond 350 yards. Even the .260 Remington (.263 diameter) is not out of place in the list of varmint cartridges. With an 85-grain Sierra HP bullet, it's possible to get muzzle velocities more than 3,000 fps. I might add that the .260 Remington cartridge might be a better combination cartridge (medium size big game and varmints) than the 6mms. The 140-grain bullet in the .260 is capable of 2,650 fps muzzle velocity. With the .260's lower recoil, it's a perfect cartridge for young hunters and anyone who is concerned about recoil.

Picking the right varmint rifle and cartridge is a personal matter. There are no absolute guidelines. The paramount factor concerns the type of terrain you hunt. Rolling terrain or steep hillsides where shots

are normally under 200 yards can be handled nicely with a .22 Hornet. The .222 and .223 Remingtons are ideal 250-yard cartridges. The .22-250 Remington easily qualifies as a 300-yard cartridge. The .220 Swift, .243 Winchester and .240 Weatherby will add another 100 yards to the range of the .22-250.

These are some of the factory rounds that are popular varmint cartridges, but a smattering of wildcat creations, along with several benchrest rounds, should get serious consideration. Most of the wildcats are easy to make and are superbly accurate. For instance, the .19 Calhoon is a .22 Hornet case necked down to 19-caliber and fire-formed to a straight wall case with a sharp 30-degree shoulder angle. It generates around 3,300 fps with a 32-grain Calhoon bullet. It offers better long range accuracy than the .22 Hornet.

The .22 BR Remington is made by necking down Remington's 6mmBR case. This is one of the most accurate wildcats I've tested. It's not a long range varmint cartridge, but its accuracy potential out to 250 yards is incredible.

The 6mmPPC and 6mmBR Remington benchrest rounds are perfect for precision varmint shooting out to 275 yards. These short range cartridges (basically designed for competitive shooting out to 200 yards) are designed primarily for one-hole accuracy. Although the heavy barrel varmint rifle can't be compared to a custom made benchrest rifle, the inherent accuracy of these two cartridges will enhance the success ratio of the varmint hunter.

Keep in mind that the most accurate varmint rifle can't perform to its highest degree if it isn't topped with a high quality variable varmint scope. Bausch & Lomb, Nightforce, Schmidt & Bender, Sightron and Burris offer optical sights with precise metering and high resolution. They aren't inexpensive, but their incomparable clarity and reliability are beyond question. In other words, any of these scopes are worth starting a new cookie jar fund for. □

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

Hunters in Missouri took 13,230 turkeys during the 2-week season in October 2000, down from the 14,651 taken in 1999.

Approximately 7,500 hunters in South Dakota harvested 24,928 resident Canada geese during the September 2000 season — up from the 17,850 birds taken by 6,308 hunters in 1999.

North Dakota, Virginia, Minnesota and Alabama have included language in their state constitutions making hunting and fishing constitutional rights.

Texas Parks and Wildlife and the Texas General Land Office have been awarded two grants totaling \$1.3 million from the National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore wetland habitat in the Galveston Bay system.

Pennsylvania's Lancaster, Chester, York and Berks counties are among the top 12 counties in the nation for farmland preservation programs. Lancaster County ranks second in a survey, behind Montgomery County, Maryland — with 39,000 acres preserved or 10 percent of its farmland.

There were six hunting fatalities during the November 15-30 deer firearm season in Michigan in 2000. Two of the hunters were wearing camouflage clothing; three were mistaken for deer; one was hunting prior to legal hours; and two were self-inflicted by hunters climbing into or out of treestands.

Duck hunters in Arkansas bagged a record 1.1 million mallards during the 1999-2000 winter season.

A survey of licensed hunters and anglers showed that the six strongest sportsmen organizations in terms of top-of-mind awareness are the National Rifle Association, Ducks Unlimited, North American Hunting Club, Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, Buck Masters and Safari Club International.

Officials in Wisconsin are so concerned about the socioeconomic impact of deer overpopulation that last season they gave away hunting tags (one bonus permit for each license sold) to entice hunters to harvest more deer. The deer population was estimated at 1.7 million last November.

Deer hunting contributes an estimated \$200 million to Ohio's economy.

Over a 5-year period beginning in the summer of 2002, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to release at least 25 grizzly bears into the Selway-Bitterroot and Frank Church-River of No Return wilderness areas along the Idaho/Montana border. The combined four million acres makes up the largest block of wilderness in the Rocky Mountains south of Canada. Most of the grizzlies will be taken from Canada.

Answer: Poison Ivy; Leaves of three, let them be.

Staghorn Sumac; White berries, not red.



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(from Set No.2)

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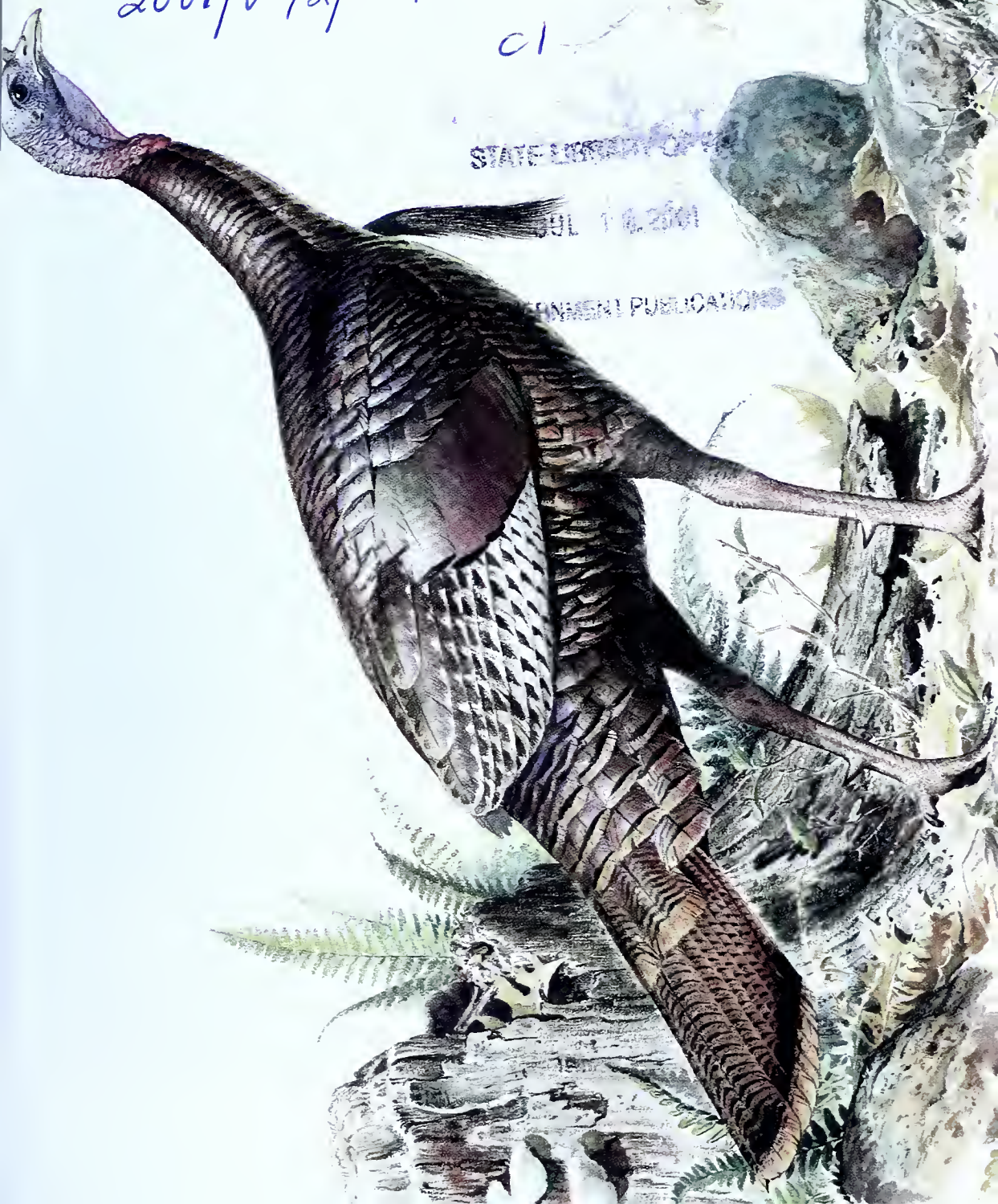
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Unbiased Thoughts

WITH SO MANY NEW, tradition-breaking initiatives being considered for this past April Commission meeting, the Game Commission had a comprehensive telephone survey done to get an idea of how hunters felt about the proposals. The survey was done in March, by Responsive Management, a public opinion survey company that specializes in natural resource subjects. Following are just a few of the highlights, based on the 1,009 hunters who were surveyed. The entire report is on the agency's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us), under "Hunter Information."

All of the respondents had purchased a hunting license in 2000-01. Of those, 33 percent had purchased an archery license; 16 percent, a muzzleloader license; and 10 percent a migratory game bird license.

Nearly all (97 percent) went deer hunting last year. Forty percent hunted for turkeys; 30 percent, rabbits; 28 percent, squirrels; 24 percent, pheasants; 19 percent, grouse; 11 percent, bear; and 5 percent, doves.

Not surprisingly, Pennsylvania hunters are dedicated, with 81 percent having hunted in each of the past five years. When asked how satisfied they were of their hunting experiences over the past two years, 83 percent said they were satisfied (46 percent, very satisfied; 37 percent, somewhat satisfied). Interestingly, quantity of game was the most cited reason of satisfied and dissatisfied respondents.

The primary purpose of the survey was to find out how hunters feel about possible season changes. After being informed that a higher percentage of bucks are killed in Pennsylvania than in perhaps any other state, 81 percent supported changes that would bring the buck:doe ratio to a more normal level; 12 percent opposed such changes. And, related, 84 percent supported changes that would allow bucks to live longer; 11 percent opposed such changes. When asked about hunting antlerless deer before the rut, to achieve a more natural buck:doe ratio during the rut and to reduce browse consumption, 65 percent supported the option; 30 percent opposed it.

When asked about a 1-day antlerless only hunting day the Saturday after Thanksgiving (before "buck" season), 61 percent supported it; 35 percent opposed it. Of those who opposed it, 25 percent indicated they liked "the old" regulations better; 18 percent felt that there was no need to harvest more antlerless deer; 12 percent said it would scare off bucks. A similar pattern of opinions was found for the 2-week concurrent antlered and antlerless regular firearm season (what the Commission ultimately approved). Sixty percent supported a 2-week concurrent season; 37 percent opposed it. Of those who opposed it, 33 percent did so because of safety concerns; 25 percent because they liked the old regulations better; and 11 percent because they felt there is no need to harvest more antlerless deer.

Biological factors influence management options, but opinion surveys will become more common in the years to come, as human dimension considerations — along with biological — are taken into account for agency decisions. In fact, as this is being written, Responsive Management is conducting a survey to see how *Game News* subscribers and hunters who are not subscribers feel about the magazine and possible changes to design and content. As this year's seasons and bag limits show, hunters are being heard.

— Bob Mitchell

letters

Editor:

Game News has been a part of our family since it was first published. We've always found it to be a very informative magazine on all species of wildlife. Folks that do or don't hunt can enjoy the variety of articles without thinking it's a strictly "shoot to kill theme."

Keep up the good work. It's appreciated.

D & S BRATZ
MAPLETON DEPOT

Editor:

Just finished reading about the so-called hunter who took a buck from its rightful owner, a 14-year-old boy. I can't imagine anybody stooping to such a low level.

At 14 I got my first buck, a nice 8-point, and I don't know who was more proud, me or my dad. My mom even took off work early that day, to take me and my buck to a taxidermist. I was on top of the world.

I really hope that come this fall that young boy is out in the woods enjoying deer season, and that he's with a hunter who helps him enjoy the sport the way it is meant to be.

We need all the help we can get to keep this great tradition going, and it starts with our youth.

R. WETHERBEE
GENOA, CO

Editor:

I was fortunate enough to harvest a jake on TMA 9A, on the opening day of the spring gobbler season. It was

a banded bird, part of the PGC's trap-and-transfer project.

I'd like to express my thanks to all those who helped make this a memorable spring. The efforts of the trap-and-transfer crews to provide this sort of opportunity is very appreciated. I also want to commend the professionalism, courtesy and enthusiasm of both WCO Matthew Teehan, who checked the bird as I left the woods, and biologist Mary Jo Casalena, who returned my call reporting the band.

H. BETZ,
MORGANTOWN

Editor:

Bradford County WCO Bill Bower, in his story "Carl Jarrett," did a great job of telling about the man who served as our WCO for many years. Carl is an intelligent, caring, multi-talented, personable man with a wonderful sense of humor. He and his wife, Doris, are assets to our community, and we are very proud of them.

B.M. KEEFER,
FULTON COUNTY
TREASURER
McCONNELLSBURG

Editor:

My buddy and I had a turkey respond to our calls and could even see him coming down through the

woods towards us. Just before he got within shooting range, however, we heard what sounded like a spoon being pounded on a frying pan. It was a woodpecker beating on a small metal sign. The noise sent the turkey back from where he had come.

Not discouraged, about a half hour later we had two mature gobblers coming our way, and it wasn't long before I heard my partner click off his safety, ready to fire. But just then the woodpecker returned and started pecking on the sign again, sending the two gobblers scurrying away.

Do you suppose the woodpecker was working for those turkeys, to sound the alarm to protect them from harm? It has to make you wonder.

B. FREEMAN
ERIE

Editor:

For the past seven years two good friends have invited me to their farm for archery season. I feel the nonresident hunting license is well worth the fee, and that the PGC does a great job. Also, each month I can't wait to get my *Game News*. It's a great source of information.

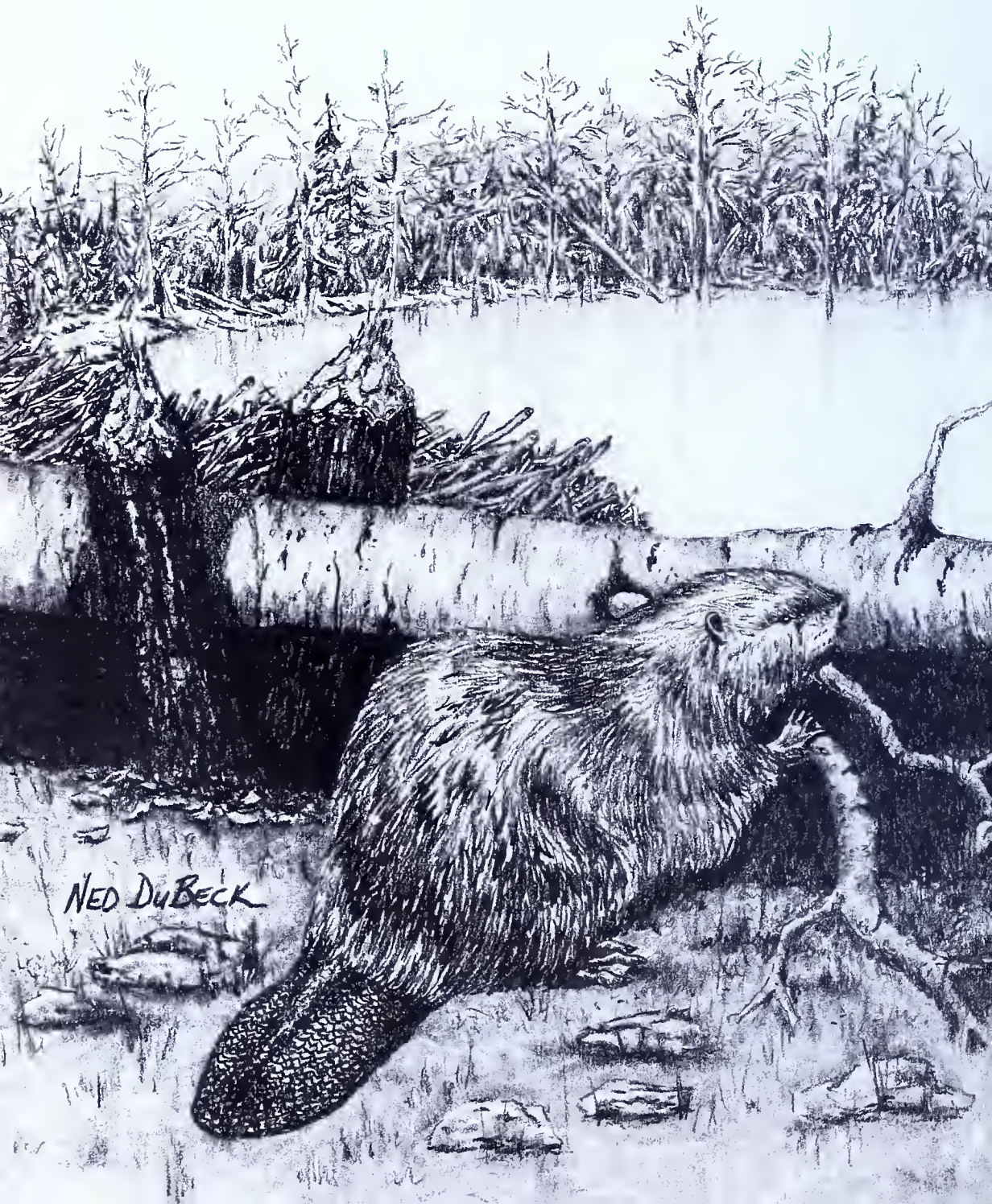
Thank you and keep up the good work.

W. ROGERS,
BAYPORT, NY

**Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters,"
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Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.**

Beavers on the Mahoning

By Edwin W. Charles



THE 1998-99 trapping season was, to say the least, going to be interesting, and I had been getting ready for it for some time. I had trapped from a canoe several seasons prior to this one, but I had to sell it when I moved. Since then, though, I had built a 16-foot cedar strip canoe, one strip at a time, and with it I planned to establish a canoe trapline for muskrats and beavers. I scouted for prime areas, and then settled on a portion of Mahoning Creek in Armstrong County that was deep enough to accommodate this method of trapping.

As some may remember, 1998 was one of those extremely dry years brought on by El Nino. The streams and ponds were best described as being shallow and shallower. Beavers inhabited the area I planned to trap, and there was plenty of sign.

The stream is 40 or more feet wide, and because there had been no major flooding from rainstorms, the beavers had been able to build a dam across the entire width. The dam kept the water level constant, and about one or two feet higher than it had been in previous years. Two years earlier I had taken two 30-pound beavers from this area.

Aspen trees 15 or more inches across the bases littered the banks. The beavers had constructed a large lodge, and immediately in front of the house, they were working on what I call their "refrigerator," which consisted of cut willows and aspen that stretched out into the stream, nearly touching the opposite bank.

Because the dam was just downstream from the local sewage treatment plant, it had attracted a lot of attention from the authorities. The dam was slowing the stream, and as a result, the outflow water from the plant was not disposing into the stream as needed. In short, the beavers and the dam had to go, and I was confident that I could help.

I made an arrangement with plant officials that worked out well. While I was trapping on this section of the stream they would allow me to store my canoe inside

the fenced area of the plant. I wouldn't have to haul the canoe to the area and unload and load it each day. This arrangement saved me time and labor, which is important when you work for a living and trap for a hobby.

The week before the opening day of muskrat season I hauled my canoe to the plant, secured it, and then made the preparations necessary for getting it in and out of the water. This may sound like a simple operation, but getting to the stream involved going down a 20-foot, 45-degree slope; down was easy, coming up would be tough. My solution was a block and tackle set-up. I connected one end to a fencepost and the other to the canoe and could easily bring the canoe, loaded with equipment, up the slope.

On opening day of muskrat season I set my traps and looked for more beaver sign. I found that the large lodge was not the only home for the beavers. I discovered a couple more bank dens, and because of their size and the clear channels leading to them, I knew the beavers were using the dens regularly. I found two channels that would be ideal for body-gripping sets. I was constantly on the lookout for areas that would make good snare sets, and I discovered a location or two where snares could be used if weather conditions allowed.

A week or two before beaver season, however, I was forced to pull out of the creek because of heavy ice. The stream had an open area about 6 to 8 feet wide in the center, but the ice two or more inches thick along the shore put an end to using the canoe and made walking unsafe.

I knew the side of the stream across from the sewage plant had the most beaver sign, and it was accessible only by an old gas well road. After doing some research, I discovered the owner's name and got permission to

use a gated road. I then gathered my gear, which I would now have to pack in on foot. The first thing I realized, however, was that I wouldn't be able to set nearly as many traps as I had originally planned.

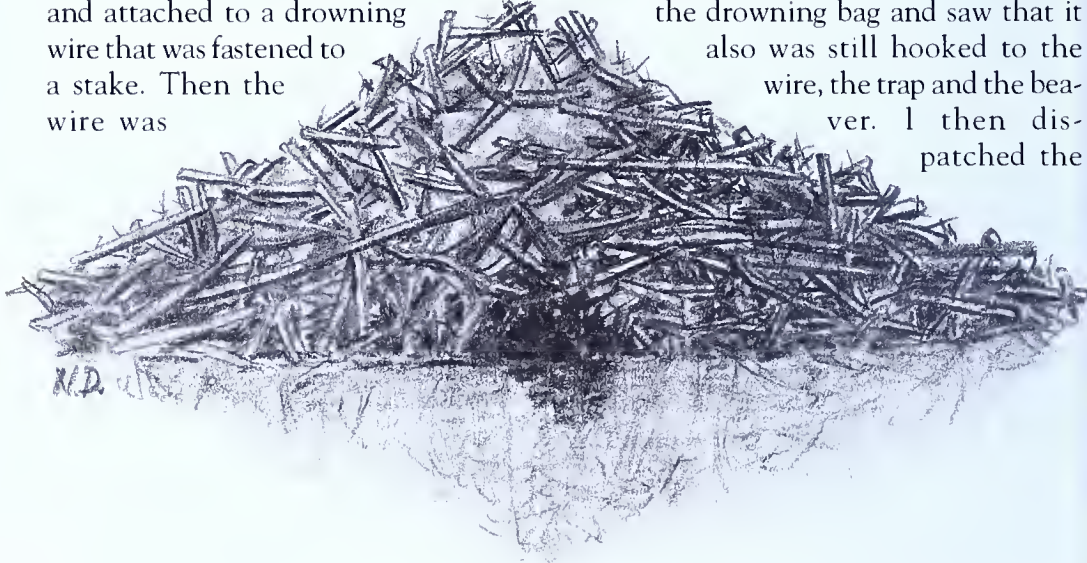
The first day arrived and so did sub-zero temperatures. I got to my first set location around 7 o'clock, and after cutting away the ice, made a body-gripping set. I moved on and placed a second body-gripping set and three foothold sets, but the freeze-up made it impossible to set my snares. I noticed two other trappers making sets on the other side of the stream, and I later learned that between us we took about eight beavers.

I was up at 5:30 the following morning and off to check the traps. It again was below zero and clear as a bell. As I approached my first set I could see ice had formed over the trap. I could look through the ice and see the body-gripping trap nestled in the channel below, ready to spring. I found the next two traps frozen under a half inch of ice. I removed the ice over the foothold traps, because I knew a forecasted warming trend would keep them open. The fourth set was not frozen over, but I couldn't find the trap. A foothold trap, it had been placed in a baited set and attached to a drowning wire that was fastened to a stake. Then the wire was

attached to a feedbag filled with about 35 pounds of rocks that had been tossed 12 feet off shore into about three feet of water. As my light illuminated the area where the bag was, I didn't see any dark shadow indicating a catch, so I donned rubber gloves and started pulling the bag to shore. As I pulled on the bag the weight suggested that the trap was empty, so I retrieved it and the trap and carefully threaded the drowning link back up the wire. I then re-made the set and proceeded to my last trap and found it undisturbed.

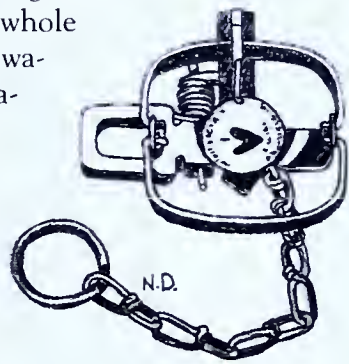
The next morning the weather had moderated to a balmy 20 degrees, and I had an intense feeling of anticipation — like a kid on Christmas Eve. It's that feeling that keeps me on the trapline during times of low fur prices.

My first three traps were empty, but still in good working order. As my light illuminated my fourth set I couldn't see the trap. Looking closer I couldn't see the wire or the stake it had been attached to, and the bag was missing, too. As I stood there perplexed, thinking someone had taken the trap, I heard a chain jingling, and when I looked toward the sound I spotted a large beaver (I learned later it weighed in at 50 pounds). The stake was on the ground between the beaver and me, so I grabbed it, and while keeping an eye on the beaver, drove it back into the ground. I spotted the drowning bag and saw that it also was still hooked to the wire, the trap and the beaver. I then dispatched the



large, mobile beaver with my .22 revolver. Only then did I realize what had occurred. Apparently, after getting caught, the beaver swam down the drowning wire, as designed. Upon reaching the end of the line, however, it had enough size and strength to drag the whole set-up out of three feet of water to the shore. The beaver must have been able to get to the surface to get air periodically, and after reaching the shore it was able to get high enough above the stake to get leverage and pull it out. The only thing that kept it from escaping was the 35-pound bag of rocks hanging on the wire. I learned several valuable lessons from this incident: make the trap chain short,

six inches or even less on a drowning set of this sort; keep the weight in the bag as heavy as you can lift; three feet of water is not enough to drown all beavers; and the longer the stake the better.



Because of work commitments, I had to pull my traps a few days after I caught the big beaver. Because the combined trapping effort lowered the beaver population on the stream, the next major flood removed most of the dam, and it has never been repaired. I had the pelt from my trophy beaver tanned, and every time I look at it I'm reminded of that morning along the Mahoning. □

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The Right Place at the Right Time

By Steve Gehringer
Land Management Officer
Potter & Tioga Counties

IT WAS Thursday morning of the second week of the 1992 buck season. Back then I was the WCO for eastern Tioga County. Things had slowed down somewhat from the helter-skelter activity of the first couple days of the season, and I was in my office doing paper work when the phone rang. A dispatcher from the Northcentral Region Office reported a possible baiting violation on a camp property along Route 328, in the northern part of my district. The caller wanted to remain anonymous, and the information was sketchy. I considered whether it was worth my time to even look into this incident, because if the bait was there at all, it had probably been there since the beginning of buck season. Also, a major snowstorm had been forecasted for that afternoon, and it would be difficult to search a large area before the bait became covered with snow.

I rationalized that the best course of action would probably be to just file this information away for next buck season, but then I thought there was always the possibility that camp members would use the bait during the upcoming doe season. I debated this in my mind for a couple of minutes and, in the end, curiosity won out; I decided to investigate. I called one of my deputies who lived near the camp. He answered the phone immediately.

"Tom, I need some help on a baiting investigation. Are you available?"

"I sure am," he replied. "Are you going to pick me up?"

"Yep, see you in 15 minutes." I answered.

Tom Roberts was one of those deputies every district officer should have. His whole life revolved around the Game Commission. In his younger years he worked on the Food & Cover Corps crew. He later became a deputy but had to resign when he moved out of state for employment. In the mid-80s, however, he moved back to Pennsylvania and contacted me about becoming a deputy again, even though he was 53 years old. Putting him on as a deputy was one of the smartest things I ever did. He was active, used excellent judgement, and I relied on him heavily.

By the time this incident occurred, however, Tom was getting older and he was slowing down somewhat. He no longer climbed mountains on foot patrol, and didn't stay out all night on jacklight patrol, but he was still an active deputy and invaluable to me. If I needed him to drop me off to do some investigation or surveillance, then take the vehicle and hide it and pick me up a couple of hours later when I radioed him, he was more than willing to help. Such was the case this day.

We arrived at the camp and, just as I expected, no one was around. I put camouflage overalls over my uniform and grabbed my portable radio. I had more than a hundred acres of wooded



slope to search. I told Tom to get the vehicle hidden somewhere, and I would radio him when and where I needed to be picked up.

As soon as I got out of the vehicle it began snowing. I began a methodical search, following all the ATV trails that crisscrossed the property. Most of them led to treestands, and I wondered if hunters walked at all anymore. I expected to find corn or salt around the stands, but there was nothing, not even any residue or sign that deer had worked the area and cleaned up the bait. After checking the fourth stand and finding no bait, I began to think there was nothing to this incident, that maybe someone was playing a trick on me, or just had a grudge against the camp members.

It started snowing harder, so I decided to give up. If there was bait on the property, it would soon be covered. Just as I reached for my radio to call Tom to meet me, a shot rang out along the ridge. Not a close shot, but not too far to check out. It was still buck sea-

son, and some hunter might have gotten a shot at a legal buck. Again, curiosity won out, so I radioed Tom and told him I would be moving away from his location, but was hopeful I could keep radio contact. I hadn't gone more than 100 yards when I cut across a set of fresh boot tracks that were following deer tracks heading the same direction I was traveling. The woods were open, but visibility was reduced because of the snowfall.

After a couple hundred yards the tracks went into a pine thicket, and I thought I should be getting close to where I had heard the shot. I went into the pine thicket, which was less than two acres in size, and just as I was about to break out the other end, I hesitated and looked through the last couple of trees. I spotted a splash of orange, so I moved cautiously through the last few trees.

The woods opened up again, and about 150 yards in front I spotted a hunter, bent over, facing away from me. His orange hunting coat was lying on the ground, and he appeared to be dressing out a deer. The hunter looked familiar, long curly black hair, slight build, average height, and his mannerisms. Could it be Gerry? This was his stomping ground. If it was him, the odds were pretty good that he was doing something illegal.

Gerry was an individual that my neighboring officers and I were familiar with. He had been arrested a couple of times for illegally killing deer, and he was a known drug user. He wasn't known to be a violent person, but I was still concerned if it was him. He had disappeared for a while, and we had heard he moved out of the state to seek employment or to avoid outstanding warrants. I didn't know if he had returned. Boy, I thought, I wish I had my binoculars. I had left them in the vehicle, thinking I would not need them to check for bait. I decided to wait until the hunter began dragging out his deer before checking him.

After waiting about a half hour, however, I thought it seemed to be taking a long time just to tag and field-dress a deer. Just then the hunter reached into a pocket of his hunting coat and pulled out a large plastic garbage bag. He shook the bag open, reached down and picked up a hindquarter and put it into the bag. He then reached down again, picked up a second hindquarter and placed it into the bag. At this point my suspicions were aroused. This was not normal procedure for getting a legally killed deer out of the woods. I didn't attempt to radio Tom for fear the hunter would hear me. He continued to put more deer parts into the bag, and then he put his coat back on and picked up his rifle and slung it across his back. He tried to pick up the plastic bag, but it was too heavy, so he started to drag it through the fresh snow. A couple hundred yards down the slope was a steep bank that dropped off to a stream, and across the stream some houses were along Route 328.

I decided to take a chance and radio Tom. "338 to 338D," I whispered into the radio. The response I got was garbled, as I was getting out of radio range. I sure hoped Tom could hear me. I keyed the radio again, explained to Tom what had transpired, and told him to get on Route 328 and head east. Again, I got a garbled response and had no

way of knowing if he had understood anything I had said.

I put the radio in my back pocket and started to angle down the mountain, going from tree to tree, hoping that the hunter would not spot me until I got much closer. Just as I was moving between two trees, he stopped to rest, lifted his head and looked right at me. We were about 100 yards apart, and he began dragging the bag again, only now at a much faster pace. I pursued him and he continued down the mountain, quickening his pace but still hanging onto the garbage bag.

"Stop," I yelled, "state conservation officer!"

He dropped the bag and starting running down the hill at full speed with reckless abandon. I radioed Tom and told him I was in pursuit and heading for Route 328.

I wasn't gaining any ground on the hunter. In fact, he was pulling farther away. He was nearing the high bank that dropped to the stream, and I remember thinking that if he didn't slow down he would kill himself. The hunter leaped out over the bank in full stride and totally disappeared from my sight. I slowed down as I approached the bank, certain I would see a broken

body lying in the stream below. As I looked over the bank, though, I didn't see anyone. I could see where he had landed in the snow, about three quarters of the way down the bank. I looked downstream. Nothing. I looked upstream and didn't spot anything right away, but then I noticed the man running full speed up the middle of the stream until he disappeared around a bend. I couldn't believe it. Not only did he appear



not to be hurt, but he was getting away from me. He was headed for 328 where, for all I knew, he had a vehicle parked. If it was Gerry, I was pretty sure he didn't live in any of the houses across the stream.

I went up to where I last saw him, searching the banks on both sides of the stream for his boot tracks. I was losing precious time, but I finally found where he left the stream in an area behind several houses. The tracks went between two of the houses, and just when I felt sure he was heading for Route 328, the prints made a 90-degree left turn and disappeared into the back door of one of the houses.

I stayed outside and yelled, "state conservation officer, come on out!" No response. My heart was pounding and I was out of breath. I yelled again and then backed off, realizing that whoever I was dealing with still had a gun with him, and I also had to make sure he didn't try to escape out some other door. I took up a vantage point where I could see both the front and back doors, and then radioed Tom, not really expecting a response. To my relief, he answered on my first try. He sounded close, too.

"Where are you, Tom?"

"On 328, about a mile east of where I dropped you off." Just then he came into view. I waved to him and he pulled in front of the house. I explained the situation and then told him to watch the front door. I was going to the back door and try to talk this guy into coming out. Just as I approached the back door, however, it opened, and out came Gerry.

"Officer Gehringer, am I glad to see you. I want to report a mistake kill," he calmly said. Taken by surprise, and slightly amused by his ridiculous statement, I hesitated before responding. I looked him over and realized he was no longer carrying a gun.

"I don't think so, Gerry," I replied. "It's a little late for that. I guess I can safely assume that is a doe you left up there in the woods in the garbage bag." It was more of a statement than a question.

"Yeah, who told you I would be hunting up there?"

"Sorry, Gerry, that information is confidential. Where is the gun you used to kill the deer?"

"In the basement under a mattress."

"Is anyone else in the house?"

"I don't think so."

"Whose house is this?"

"A friend's."

"Don't you think it would bother him if he knew that you just came running into his house and hid in his basement with a firearm while a law enforcement officer was pursuing you?"

Gerry just shrugged his shoulders.

Tom and I handcuffed Gerry and then put him in my vehicle. Tom stayed with him while I went up on the mountain to recover the doe. When I got back, Tom showed me a resident hunting license that Gerry had recently purchased. I asked Gerry about living out of state, and he said he had moved back into the state, but he could not show me any identification that could prove his residency. As a result, I took Gerry before the local magistrate and charged him with the unlawful taking of an antlerless deer. He pled guilty, but he could not pay the fine, so he was incarcerated for two days until his residency could be verified. As it turned out, he was a resident. He was released and put on time payments.

The next day I said to Tom, "You know, there are a lot of outlaws out there like Gerry, killing deer and other game illegally, and if they just kept their mouths shut and didn't brag about it, there's a chance they'd get away with it."

Tom replied, "Yeah, you're probably right, but every once in a while everything comes together, and we just happen to be in the right place at the right time." □

Buttons to Antlers:

Part 2 — Management implications of yearling bucks dispersal.

By Christopher S. Rosenberry, PhD

PGC Wildlife Biometrician

ANIMAL POPULATIONS are rarely isolated from external factors. As discussed last month in Part I, yearling (6 to 18 months of age) white-tailed deer males travel an average of about five miles from their natal areas. In this way, dispersal represents a “mixing” of bucks, and this can have substantial effects on deer populations and management.

Yearling bucks have often been the focus of deer management efforts. Whether using physical characteristics (antler size or body size, for example) to evaluate the effectiveness of management efforts, or attempting to increase buck age structure by protecting young bucks, understanding dispersal can help in making management decisions. In this article I will address two areas related to dispersal and deer management: the size of area needed to effectively protect young bucks, and how dispersal affects management objectives.

How much area is needed to “contain” young bucks?

Members of a hunting camp want to increase the number of adult bucks (two or more years of age) where they hunt by passing up young bucks, and they are wondering how much land they need to accomplish their goal.

First, the amount of land needed to contain young bucks depends upon whether one is protecting button bucks or yearlings.

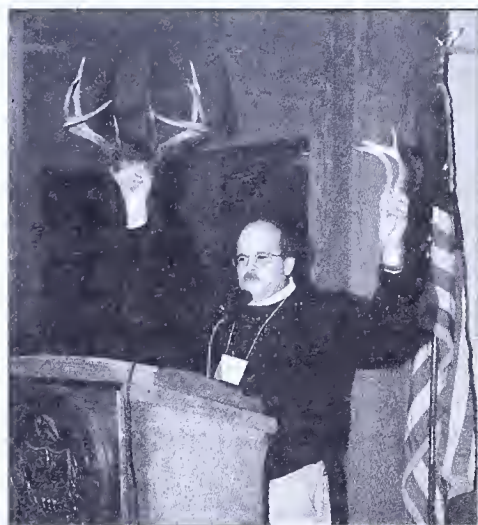
Generally, protection of button bucks (6-month-old fawns) is a difficult method of increasing buck populations. Button

bucks are vulnerable during the antlerless deer seasons, because they are difficult to distinguish from other antlerless deer. One technique to protect button bucks is to ask hunters not to shoot lone deer. Waiting for a group of deer so body sizes can be compared reduces the number of button bucks in the harvest. Additionally, even if a button buck does survive the hunting seasons, there is a good chance he will disperse from his natal range.

Despite hurdles of harvest vulnerability and dispersal, camp members decide to buy enough land to increase the number of bucks in the population by protecting button bucks, so, how many acres should they purchase? The short answer is “a lot.” By looking at dispersal distances, one can approximate the amount of land needed to contain protected button bucks.

Radio telemetry studies (one of which I did) indicate that seven miles would contain about 80 percent of all dispersing males. So, to contain 80 percent of the button bucks in an area, it would take a circle with a radius of seven miles. To put that in perspective, a 7-mile radius encompasses about 100,000 acres. If increasing the buck population is a management objective, protecting button bucks is often not the most practical method because of the huge area needed.

Realizing they cannot buy 100,000 acres, the camp members proceed to



Bob D'Angelo

DR. GARY ALT shows the fruits of letting a yearling buck walk during the hunting season when it's carrying its first legal set of antlers.

plan B: They decide to focus on protecting yearling bucks. In this scenario, timing is important. Attempting to protect yearling bucks prior to and during fall dispersal (September to November) is similar to protecting button bucks. In each case, dispersal is still possible and must be considered. However, if yearling bucks are to be protected after dispersal, the scenario changes.

In Pennsylvania, it's likely that most yearling bucks have dispersed by the time buck season begins. Once a yearling buck has settled on its post-dispersal range, he's likely to remain there the rest of his life. A general rule of thumb is that a post-dispersal buck is probably going to remain within a 1-mile area. Once again, for demonstration purposes, a circle with a radius of 1-mile encompasses about 2,000 acres. Obviously, compared to what's needed to protect button bucks, protecting yearling bucks requires much less area.

To protect yearling bucks, though, hunters need to know how to distinguish yearling bucks from those two

or more years old. Antler points and antler spread are what most people use. Opinions vary on which is better. In some areas antlers that are wider than the ear tips will most likely identify an adult buck; in other areas, most adult bucks will not have antlers wider than their ears. Whether antler points or spreads are used often depends on management goals and hunter preference.

While protecting post-dispersal yearling bucks is likely to be most effective at increasing antlered deer numbers, protecting button bucks should add some bucks to the population. Remember, some button bucks will not disperse.

How does dispersal affect management evaluation?

In deer management, physical characteristics of yearling bucks are often used to evaluate effectiveness of management practices on a given area, but the movements of bucks across areas reduces the accuracy of data, particularly on small areas.

Following dispersal, yearling bucks in an area represent a mix of "local" and "outsider" deer. One study estimated that the post-dispersal yearling buck population was about a 50:50 mix. As a result, hunters and managers must be careful when judging management success based on growth characteristics of yearling bucks. Measurements from yearling bucks harvested after dispersal may not accurately reflect the benefits of management practices.

An example will demonstrate the problem dispersal can cause when judging effectiveness of management practices.

Members of a hunting camp planted food plots to improve deer health, and then used body weights of yearling bucks taken during buck season to evaluate the effectiveness of the plots. Prior to planting food plots, bucks taken during buck season averaged 115 pounds field-dressed. Five years after planting plots, buck weights remained the same, so the camp members concluded that food plots don't work. However, food

plots did in fact increase yearling buck body weights, but the camp did not detect this because dispersal had an effect on their data.

To illustrate this point, Table 1 presents weights of 12 yearling bucks. Some of the deer are local deer and the others are deer that immigrated into the population from outside areas. Unlike the outsider bucks, the heavier “local” bucks have enjoyed the benefits of the food plots since birth. In this example, six smaller outsider bucks offset the increased body weights of six local bucks. As a result, the average body weight of yearling bucks did not differ from the average before food plots were planted.

Dispersal and the mixing of bucks from various areas can affect the evaluation of certain management practices, and should be taken into account before management actions are judged a success or failure.

Conclusions

Dispersal of yearling bucks appears to be a disheartening aspect of deer biology for those who would like to protect young bucks or use physical characteristics of yearling bucks to evaluate management practices on smaller properties. However, just as dispersal is a typical behavior of young bucks, a sedentary lifestyle appears typical of older bucks. Except for some movement during the rut, a buck will often spend the rest of his life in the area where he settles after dispersal. In other words, if a hunter passes up a yearling buck during buck season, that buck will likely be in the same area next year as an adult. If increasing the number of bucks is a management goal, protecting yearling bucks is probably more effective than protecting button bucks.

An understanding of dispersal behavior throughout a buck’s life can be used to more effectively manage populations. Although there is no all-encompassing management recommendation that will apply

Table 1. Weights of Harvested Bucks

LOCAL YEARLING BUCKS	OUTSIDER YEARLING BUCKS
128	114
135	101
104	112
131	105
127	112
112	103
Average Weight	123
	108

AN EXAMPLE of field-dressed weights of yearling bucks harvested where food plots have been established for five years. On average, the local bucks were heavier, but bucks that had dispersed from other areas cover up any measurable increase in overall weights.

to every area, some general recommendations are possible. The following are a list of recommendations to incorporate dispersal behavior into management programs targeted at young bucks.

Protecting post-dispersal yearling bucks is probably the most effective method of increasing the number of older bucks in a population, because a post-dispersal yearling buck is likely to be found in the same area for the rest of his life. Although not most effective, attempts to reduce button buck harvests should provide some additional bucks in future years. The simplest method of reducing button buck harvests is to shoot the largest antlerless deer in a group, and do not shoot lone antlerless deer. For efforts to increase buck populations to be most effective, at least a few thousand acres is recommended. Individual landowners can cooperate with their neighbors to increase the area and effectiveness of management decisions regarding yearling bucks.

Yearling buck characteristics should not be used to judge effectiveness of plantings and other management actions on smaller areas. □

Trophy Chucks

By Hazen Hileman

THE HEAT and humidity were stifling, even with us sitting under some big cherry trees at the edge of a newly cut hayfield. It was late July, and an old college pal, Bill Chessman, and I were hunting groundhogs. The abundance of chucks on this Clearfield County mountain, however, made putting up with the uncomfortable conditions worthwhile. A week earlier I had hunted another field on this farm and shot five chucks from one spot in five minutes. We were hoping to take a few trophy chucks on this afternoon.

People seldom think of woodchucks as being trophies, but they are to me. A trophy is something special or unique. My groundhog trophies are photographs, however, rather than traditional mounts, and they are placed on my wall beside elk, moose, deer and bear mounts.

Bill took the first shot, with his ancient .25-06. The rifle was built on a Springfield action, is topped with a 4-12x Redfield, and he uses handloads with 100-grain bullets. I remember when he had the rifle made in the late 1960s. The .25-06 was just becoming popular in those days.

The chuck was downhill, about 200 yards away, and when Bill shot I saw the bullet kick up dirt just over its back, sending the chuck streaking to its den at the edge of the woods.

We sat and talked about old times. We often hunted together while in college, but now, a quarter century later, we are able to get together only a couple times a year for a hunt. Mostly it is for woodchucks. The relaxed pace of groundhog hunting is a fine way to enjoy the outdoors with a pal or two.

I'm surprised at how few hunters go after chucks these days. In the last three or four years, I've seen only a few other hunters. When I was a kid, it was common to see that many in just one evening. The abundance of chucks and limited competition make for some great hunting. Pursuing chucks is a great way to get young people into hunting, too, with the weather warm and the quarry plentiful.

After a short wait we spotted a big chuck in the corner of the field, 225 yards away. I set up my .22-250 Remington Varminter. This is a factory rifle with the trigger set at three pounds of pull. The chuck looked close through the 20x Leupold scope. As it fed on the farmer's clover, I waited until it raised its head, centered the dot on its chest and squeezed the trigger. The 50-grain Hornady



molly-coated V-Max bullet took it squarely in the chest. Five minutes later Bill took one with his .25-06 at the same range. Within the next half hour, we both missed another chuck.

During a lull in the action, we talked about woodchuck rifles. Bill doesn't hunt as much as I do, and relies mainly on his .25-06. When the hay is cut, I usually hunt everyday. I use a variety of rifles, and one of my favorites is a Browning Micro Medallion .22 Hornet. Next to my .22-250s, this one gets the most use. It's great when doing a lot of walking, and when the shots are less than 150 yards. I usually use a Remington 46-grain hollow-point.

Another rifle I find great for chucks is my 700

Remington in .222.

This gun has been extensively remodeled. I've had it stocked in a fine piece of walnut

and rebarreled with a

Douglas #5 26-inch barrel. The stock was handcrafted for me by George Gill of Gill's Custom Guns in Olanta, PA. I usually have a 12x Leupold on it, but sometimes I'll switch to a 6.5-20x Leupold. It's super accurate with many loads, but my favorite is with a 50-grain Serria Blitz bullet.

Although I use specialized varminters, just about any rifle can be used for chuck hunting. With traditional big game calibers, I use lighter bullets, such as 125 grain in 30-caliber, and 120 in the 7mms. I've taken groundhogs with the .22 rimfire, .22 magnum, .218 Bee, .222, .22-250, .220 Swift, .22 Cheetah, .243, 6mm, .25-06, and even the .300 Winchester Magnum. I've even used a custom barreled Remington Model 700 in 7mm Weatherby Magnum for some chuck shooting at long range in windy conditions. For serious woodchuck hunting, though, nothing beats a heavy barreled .22-250 or .220 Swift.

As the sun dipped lower in the sky, Bill and I each shot another chuck, both at

about 200 yards. Bill missed one, and then I spotted one along the woods about 425 yards away. The chuck was in the shadows, but I could see him through the 20x Leupold. I have dots in the scope designating 200 to 600 yards, and I put the 400-yard dot on the chuck's head. If I was a little off, however, I thought it would drop into its chest. The .22-250 cracked, and the 50-grain bullet hit the chuck's head dead center. At a confirmed 424 yards, it was my longest shot of the summer. It definitely qualified as a trophy chuck, so I took a photo for my trophy room.

After my shot, we spotted another chuck in the same field, just a bit closer. Bill wanted to try my .22-250, because

the sight picture through the scope was so clear at that distance.

He centered the dot on the chuck's head and squeezed the trigger. The sound of a hit drifted back, and we stepped off the shot at 413 yards. While we were taking more photos, I spotted a chuck peeking out of a hole about 125 yards away. Only a small part of its head offered a target, but through the 20x Leupold it was crystal clear. I got into a good position and squeezed one off from my old Remington. After reaching the groundhog I noticed it was nearly all black. It was a trophy chuck if I ever saw one. We had a good hunt, helped rid the farmers of some pests, and had some real trophies.

It's too bad more people don't go groundhog hunting. It provides some quality time outdoors at a nice time of year. An old hunter once told me that our memories and trophies are all we have left when we can't hunt anymore. I suppose that's true. □



“How It Will Work”

The Elk License Drawing

By Rawland D. Cogan

PGC Wildlife Biologist

AT ITS APRIL 2001 meeting, the Pennsylvania Board of Commissioners approved the first elk hunt in 70 years, November 12-17. This limited hunt is designed to slow the growth of the herd, encourage range expansion to occur in desired areas and reduce conflicts. Thirty licenses (15 antlered and 15 antlerless) will be selected in a random drawing on September 29, at a site yet to be determined in the elk range.

ELK MANAGEMENT AREAS AND LICENSE ALLOCATION PER AREA.

Area	Antlered	Antlerless	Total
1	2	1	3
2	2	2	4
3	2	4	6
4	2	3	5
5	2	3	5
6	1	1	2
7	1	0	1
8	1	0	1
9	1	1	2
10	1	0	1
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
13	0	0	0
14	0	0	0
15	0	0	0
Totals	15	15	30

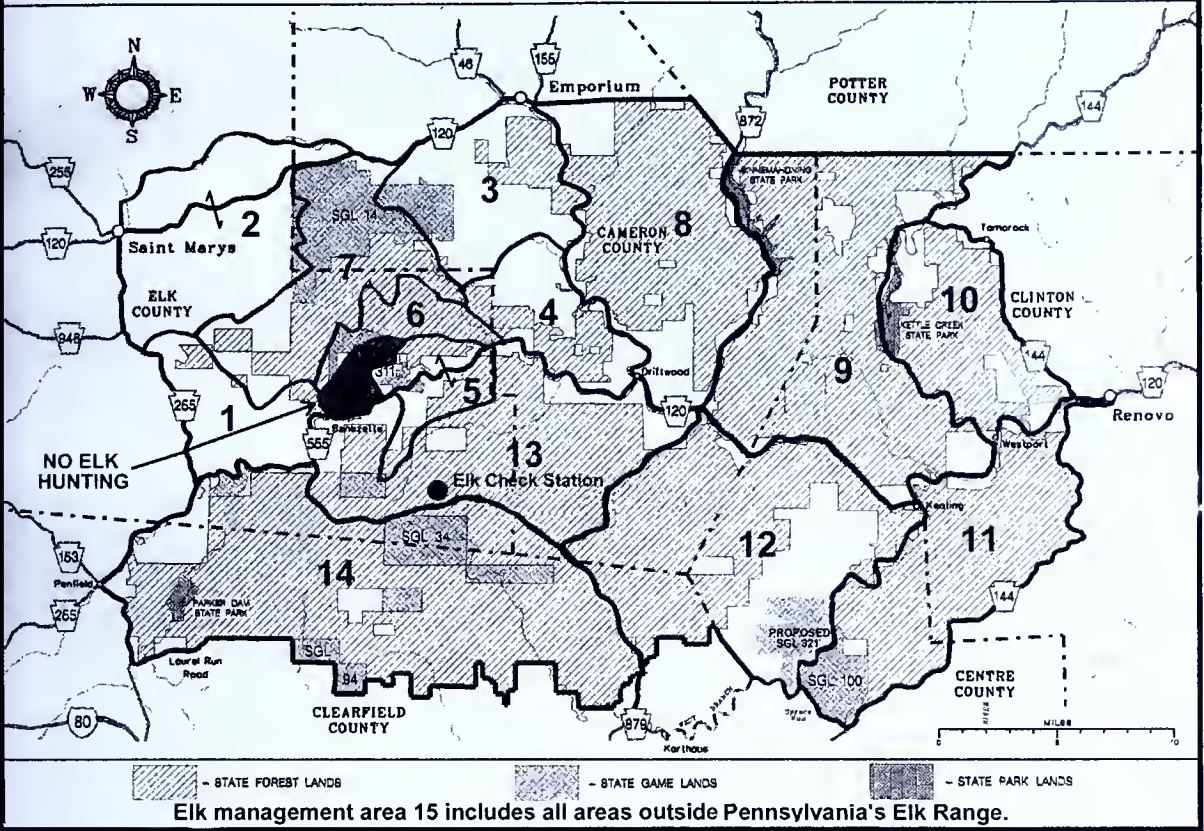
Application Procedure

Interested persons may apply for an elk license via “The Outdoor Shop,” which is posted on the agency’s website, (www.pgc.state.pa.us), or by filling out and mailing an application. For mailing, applications may be printed from the website or taken from the 2001-02 *Pennsylvania Hunting and Trapping Digest*. Completed applications should be mailed to: Pennsylvania Game Commission, Elk License Application, P.O. Box 61890, Harrisburg, PA 17106-1890. Applications will be accepted via the “Outdoor Shop” until September 14, 2001, while those submitted through the mail must be received (not postmarked) by August 24, 2001. The reason for the different deadline dates is because applications that are mailed must be manually entered into the electronic data base that will be used for the drawing.

A \$10 non-refundable application fee must be submitted with the application. On-line applications must be accompanied by a credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express). Applications submitted through the mail must be accompanied by a check or money order (do not send cash) made payable to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Applications will not be accepted at any PGC office. Only one application may be accepted per person; anybody who submits more than one will have all voided.

Applicants may indicate their prefer-

PENNSYLVANIA ELK MANAGEMENT AREAS



ence for either an antlered or antlerless elk license, or they may select either sex. For those who select antlered only, if they are drawn after all the antlered elk licenses are allocated, they will not receive a license. Those who are selected for an antlered elk license will not be eligible to receive another Pennsylvania elk license for five years, to provide additional opportunity to others. Those selected to hunt antlerless elk, however, may apply in subsequent years. Just like with deer, a harvest of antlerless elk is necessary to manage population growth.

License Fees

Applicants are not required to purchase a resident, or nonresident, general hunting license to apply for the drawing. However, those selected must purchase a general 2001-02 hunting license prior to the

hunt, and an elk license (\$25 for residents and \$250 for nonresidents).

Public Drawing

The public drawing will be held September 29, 2001, as part of an elk expo that will be held in communities within Pennsylvania's elk range. The first 15 applications selected will be for antlered elk licenses, the next 15 for antlerless elk licenses. Of the 30 licenses, up to two may be awarded to nonresidents. This number is based on the percentage of nonresident general hunting licenses sold during the previous year (about seven percent).

Sporting Arms of Choice

Minimum standards for sporting arms and ammunition for elk hunting have also been set. Those standards are: centerfire rifles or handguns at



Larissa Rose

THIS YEAR'S aerial survey estimated the elk herd to be 622 animals. Following this year's calf crop we expect the elk population to number approximately 700 by November 2001.

least 270-caliber that propel projectiles designed to expand on impact and are at least 130 grains; shotguns at least 12 gauge; muzzleloading long-guns at least 50-caliber that propel a single projectile of at least 210 grains; cross-bows (for those with required permit) with a draw weight of at least 125 pounds or less than 200 pounds; bows with a draw weight of at least 45 pounds, and any arrow equipped with a broadhead that has an outside diameter or width of at least an inch and no fewer than two fixed, steel cutting edges in the same plane throughout the length of the cutting surface.

Management Areas

Fourteen elk management areas have been established within the range to manage the population effectively and efficiently. These areas vary from 11 mi² to 146 mi² and average 61 mi². Boundaries are, for the most part, highways, access roads or waterways that are clearly defined. Antlered and antlerless licenses for each management area have been allocated based

on management objectives for the area.

Hunters will be able to select first and second management area preferences on their applications. For example, hunters may want to hunt a particular area because they are familiar with it. If a hunter's application is drawn, but both selections have already been filled, the hunter will be assigned a license for one of the remaining management areas still open. To manage elk range expansion, elk management area 15

has been established. Area 15 includes areas not included in areas 1-14, except for where no hunting will be allowed. If elk disperse into undesirable areas (causing conflicts) then hunters may be permitted to hunt in Area 15. PGC staff will determine if area 15 will be hunted on a case by case basis. Hunting on private land within the management areas may be possible, but permission should be obtained prior to the hunt.

For more information about elk management areas, visit the PGC website, or refer to the 2001-2002 *Hunting and Trapping Digest*.

No Elk Hunting Area

Sensitive to the rules of fair chase, The Game Commission will not allow any elk hunting within the 7-8 mi² area around the elk viewing area near Benezette, because these animals have become habituated to humans. This area will be clearly marked with no elk hunting signs.

Elk Guide Permit

Individuals, particularly those who live in the elk range or are familiar with elk and elk hunting, may provide valuable as-

sistance to elk hunters unfamiliar with the area and, ultimately, our efforts to successfully manage the herd. (Local residents will be able to be an important part of that process. Guides are not required to hunt elk.)

According to the Game and Wildlife Code, however, persons may not participate in any hunt unless they have the required license(s). Because elk licenses are limited to 30, those who wish to guide licensed elk hunters will be required to purchase an elk guide permit (in lieu of any sort of elk license) and also attend the mandatory orientation program for elk hunters. With the required permit, a guide would be allowed to scout and locate elk, for example, and direct or lead the hunter to a specific area. Game Commission employees will not serve as elk hunt guides.

Elk Guide Permits are available from the Game Commission's Bureau of Law Enforcement. Applications for an Elk Guide Permit may be obtained from any region office and the Harrisburg headquarters. Applications must be completed and returned to the PGC Harrisburg headquarters, along with a check or money order. The Elk Guide Permit will cost \$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents. Persons do not need an Elk Guide Permit to accompany a licensed elk hunter, if all they do is help after the animal is harvested. Please call 717-783-8164 for more information.

Hunter Orientation

Every elk hunter will be required to attend a mandatory hunter orientation program scheduled for November 11, 2001, in St. Marys. This program will cover many aspects of elk management, sex and age criteria, elk anatomy, shot placement, care of

the meat and cape, management area boundaries, private landowner concerns and, among other topics, data collection.

Check Station

Every hunter who gets an elk must take it to the elk check station within 24 hours. Hunters do not have to bring the elk to the check station whole. Elk are large animals; bulls can weigh up to 900 pounds, so hunters may quarter or bone out the animal. At the check station, biologists will weigh, sex, age, pull a tooth, check for lactating females, measure antlers, collect samples for disease testing and attach a legal seal. Creating a biological database of harvested elk will provide additional information on which future management decisions can be based. Hunters will also be asked to complete a hunter questionnaire at the check station, to provide information that may improve future hunts.

This year, for the first time in 70 years, the Pennsylvania Game Commission is offering hunters an elk season. This season is based on more than three decades of research. Over the years we've learned a great deal about these magnificent animals and the habitat practices we can implement to manage and protect them.

That we are now able to offer this hunt serves as a tribute to many government agencies, conservation organizations, private business and individuals who have worked so hard to bring the elk population back to where it is today. □

Wanna Be a Better Bowhunter?

By Brooke Hershiser
Volunteer Regional Coordinator
PGC Bowhunter Education Program

WHAT WOULD YOU do if someone told you that you could double your bowhunting success in 12 hours? What if they said that no matter what your current skill level, you could improve your shooting and hunting and your enjoyment afield? What would you think if they said that this same 12-hour investment would help to secure the future of bowhunting for future generations? And what if you found out that without this secret, you may not be able to bowhunt where and when you want? Would you buy life insurance for \$12 to save yourself and your family from grief and loss due to a mishap while enjoying your favorite pastime? Wanna be a better bowhunter?

Of course you do. So what's the magic arrow that will transform your bowhunting career? Graduate from the PGC's Bowhunter Education Program. Is there a cost? Sure. For the price of a

pizza, \$12, just one dollar per hour, you can have everything listed above.

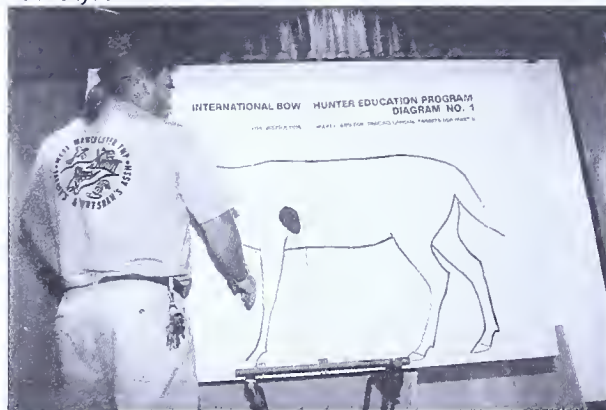
Double Your Success

This may seem hard to believe, but studies in New York showed that just by attending and graduating from the International Bowhunter Education Program, bowhunters improved their success from 11.4 percent to 25 percent. Of course, your results may vary, but for the cost, this has got to be the best thing you could add to your bowhunting arsenal. And who can't afford to improve?

All Skill Levels Profit

You've been bowhunting for more than 20 years; you don't need and won't benefit from the program, right? Wrong. Graduates of all skill levels rave about how much they get from the program. There is always more to learn. The course is heavily focused on active, hands-on, involvement. More than half the program is conducted outside under actual field conditions, and even the classroom portion is interactive and keeps the students captivated in the learning process. "Old-timers" taking the class are often encouraged to demonstrate tips

Keith Snyder



THE International Bowhunter Education Program (IBEP) is the curriculum used in the PGC's Bowhunter Education Program course.

they have learned in the school of hard knocks, while rookies who are just picking up a bow and arrow for the first time can ask questions or receive personalized instruction at any time. The beginner can reach a level of proficiency much higher and faster than he could on his own. Covering subjects such as shot placement, animal anatomy, hunting techniques, equipment options and treestand use; the program is extremely comprehensive.

Practically everyone can improve his or her tracking ability, right? During one module of the course you will participate in a realistic shot situation and trail the quarry to the end.

Preserve Bowhunting

Make no mistake about it, this course is designed to make you a better ambassador of the sport. Knowledgeable participants who know how to present themselves to anti-hunters and nonhunters are the biggest advantage the future of bowhunting can have. On the other side of the coin, uninformed and misguided individuals do tremendous harm in the court of public opinion. Often the reason these people hurt the sport is the way they have learned to think and act on their own, or with the help of other misguided souls, and that is not the best way. Responsibility is the major theme throughout the instruction, because everyone who picks up a bow and arrow accepts a responsibility to others, themselves, and the animals they hunt.

Required Learning

The International Bowhunter Education Program (IBEP) is the curriculum used in the Pennsylvania course. Though the IBEP is voluntary here, many states are now requiring graduation from some sort of official bowhunting course for those who want to obtain a bowhunting license. Many individuals find out too late that the bowhunt they have been planning is an impossibility, because they do not have the required bowhunter education card needed

to purchase a license in that state. Certain municipalities and military installations here in Pennsylvania do require proof of graduation. The IBEP is given in all 50 states and Canada, as well as many foreign countries, so it's the accepted curriculum worldwide.

Life Insurance

Although the Game Commission's Bowhunter Education Program is not solely a safety course, safety is woven through every portion of the program. It is the best kind of life insurance. The kind you don't have to die to collect on.

Recent studies show that one out of every three bowhunters will sustain injuries from a treestand fall. Do you know two other bowhunters? One of you will fall and be hurt, or perhaps die. The sad part is you don't have to. You don't even have to fall in the first place. Proper use of treestands and fall restraint systems is included as a hands-on portion of the program. Every year thousands of bowhunters use their treestands improperly, or their equipment fails, resulting in high-speed vertical exits. Each year, including this one, bowhunters, thinking they're doing the right thing, die because they unknowingly use safety devices incorrectly and do more harm to themselves than good. Make sure you and your family are properly protected. Take the course and learn to stay alive.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission's Bowhunter Education Program is offered at select locations throughout the state. Each course is limited to 30 participants, so register early. To find out more and learn how to register for a class, check us out on the web at www.pgc.state.pa.us or call the PGC's Hunter-Trapper Education Division at 717-787-7015.

So I'll ask you again, "Wanna be a better bowhunter?" ☐

A Day so Rare

Penn's Woods Sketchbook
— BOB SOPCHICK

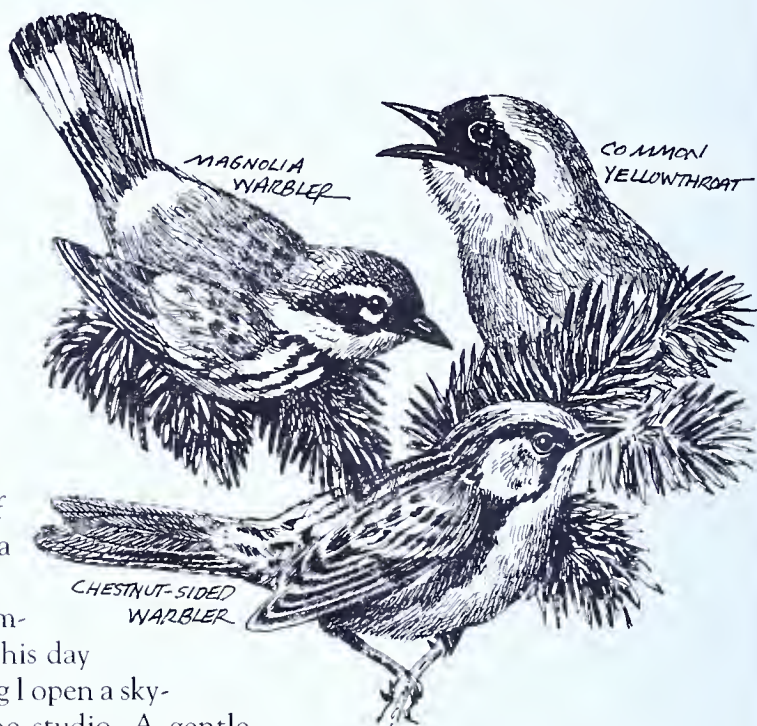
IT HAD BEEN raining all week without a spot of sunshine, then, when it seemed the ground couldn't hold another drop, the showers stopped, ending with layers of low-scudding clouds swirling quickly from the east below a solid canopy of slate-gray clouds sailing south. I'm up early the next morning, at 4:30, wakened by robin song and the cheery peal of cardinals forecasting a sunny day.

I had a painting to complete, and had scheduled this day to finish it. At mid-morning I open a skylight and birdsong fills the studio. A gentle northwest breeze stirs the treetops as the sun dries the sodden earth. A mourning dove lights on the tilted window as they often do. It moans softly, beckoning me to leave my work and come outside.

What was originally to be an hour's break from the drawing board for some leisurely bird watching progresses to several hours of intense observation, then relents to a day-long sketching session as a surprising number of warblers are drifting through. After several days of laying low, the air is alive with birds, each sweet roundelay overlapping another without any discord, the collective chorus rising in what can only be described as jubilation.

WATCHING WARBLERS requires patience and concentration. Warblers are extremely active, and you must anticipate their movements as they weave through thick second growth or the dense topography of an evergreen. The effort is worth it, though, as their striking graphics and colorful breeding plumage are a delight to the eye.

Several warblers trickle through a towering pine like a handful of jewels falling through the boughs. A blackpoll warbler works the crevices of bark along a branch while a magnolia warbler, decked out in harlequin costume flits below. The magnolia warbler's name is misleading as it is more at home in conifer forests. Joining these birds is a boldly marked chestnut-sided warbler. The chessie's scientific name is misspelled *pensylvanica*, and should be *pennsylvanica*, as it was first observed in Pennsylvania. A common yellowthroat sings for a long while, about ten feet away. Its profile is decidedly wren-like, and its repeated song *cheeseburger, cheeseburger, cheeseburger* reminds me that it is almost lunchtime.



MY FAVORITE SUMMER BIRD is the catbird. From dawn to dusk nothing escapes their curious nature. If something is amiss in their territory they are Johnny-on-the-spot, ready for action. One catbird learned how to follow me closely as I cut the lawn, chasing after every moth that flushed in the wake of the mower.



A big wasp buzzes across a stretch of lawn with a catbird in hot pursuit. Without slowing, the wasp flies through a 2-inch gap between the fence slats, but the catbird lifts up and over the fence, and in a wonderfully executed move that would rival a hawk, it nabs the wasp out of the air with its beak, lands and whacks it

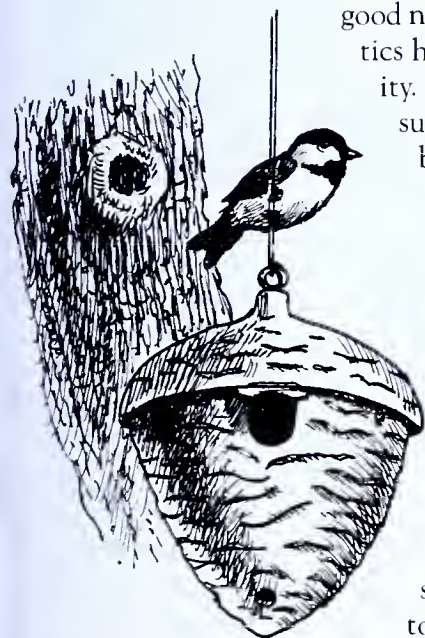
twice against a slate. The catbird rakes the wasp across the slate, and the hapless insect loses a wing and then is taken into the dark folds of shrubbery.

THROUGHOUT THE DAY chimney swifts chatter and arc across the cobalt sky. It is a real feat to pick them up in the binoculars and stay in focus when they suddenly bank and wheel. Several years ago I located a tall, abandoned factory chimney less than a mile away, and sure enough, scores of the birds pour into it every evening.

A few thoughts about binoculars: Birding becomes much more enjoyable when using high quality optics, those that show every detail of their feathers and the highlights in their eyes and beaks. Binoculars that focus sharply to 15-feet or less are best, because much birding is done at close range, and in the summer, when the birding slows, butterfly watching can be just as much fun. The

good news is that in the last few years optics have made tremendous leaps in quality. It is possible today to purchase a pair of superior quality, waterproof, quick-focus

binoculars for around \$250 that rival and even exceed some premium optics costing \$1,000 more. A website that offers comprehensive reviews of current optics with guidelines on how to select what works best for you is www.betterviewdesired.com.

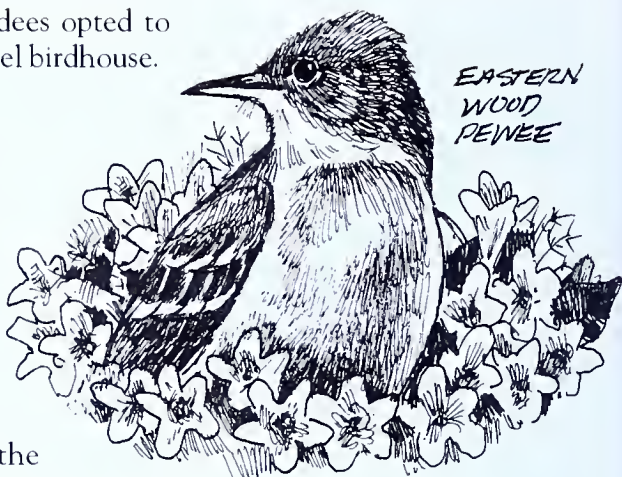


I HAVE A WEAK SPOT for birdhouses and nest boxes, and more than a dozen are placed around our yard. Last year at a garage sale I found an old, ceramic birdhouse that resembles a hornet's nest, just perfect for a wren or chickadee. I hung it from the crabtree, certain that it would be claimed. It had hardly stopped swinging from its wire when a chickadee began to check it out. I watched for nest-building activity for

several days, then noticed the chickadees opted to nest in a tree cavity just behind the novel birdhouse. So much for my real estate venture.

A LONG-STANDING GUIDELINE of birding is “ears before eyes, eyes before binoculars.” I listened to a CD of birdsongs all winter (much to the distraction of my family) attempting to learn the nuances of various bird-calls, then visualizing the bird singing. This has helped tremendously as I’m now able to immediately identify the bird by its song, then spot it with my eyes and get on it quickly with my binoculars that I begin focusing as they are raised.

Some birds are named after their songs: the bobwhite quail, catbird, chickadee, whip-poor-will and whooping crane, for example. Today the high-pitched strains of the eastern wood pewee filter in through the background music. It begins with a *pee-ah-wee!* Then a pause, followed by a descending *pee—oh*. This song is useful in locating the pewee because, with its subtle gray-olive plumage with soft ashen underparts, it’s difficult to spot. I homed in on the pewee quickly and walked directly at the sound. The bird popped up right in front of me among some blooms, flew up to a wire, then moved on.



NO BACKYARD IS COMPLETE without a nesting wren, and we’ve had them nesting here for more than 20 consecutive years. The male used to drive me to distraction with his incessant singing, but I noticed that as I have grown older I find comfort in plain and familiar things, and now enjoy his constant trilling. The wrens that raised a brood last year abandoned their young as soon as they fledged. Two days later the four fledglings had all died. I found this to be quite strange — to go to all the trouble of rearing the brood and then letting them expire at such a crucial time.

Anyway, at the time of this writing, the male is back, trying to coerce a female to take up residence in the birdhouse next to the driveway. He flies from there to his perch in the silver maple all day, singing his heart out. Just as I am drawing him a car pulls into the driveway. It’s a friend of my son who wants me to look at his new car. I startle the wren from his perch and it flies through the open window of the car. We open the doors and step back, but the

bird crowds into a corner under the sloping glass of the rear window. I capture him and hold him briefly, studying the sepia-toned vermiculations of his wings, then set him free. Now that’s firsthand observation.

A LOUD croaking *frahnk!* *frahnk!* is the harsh call of the great blue heron. These large birds are late day travelers, flying high overhead toward the river, catching the last rays of the sun that has set some time ago.



The heron is the final bird of the day to make the sketchbook. Dusk draws down and the air cools noticeably. My eyes are bleary, and I'm satisfied with the day's efforts.

In the afterglow of the day I am back in the studio reviewing the drawings and notes, and see that there is probably enough for my annual birding column. Not ten yards from the skylight the catbirds begin screaming at something in the maple tree and are quickly joined by a cardinal, a grackle and some chickadees. I poke my head out of the skylight but can't see what they're making a fuss about. I look for a sharpshinned hawk, or a screech owl, but can't see anything. Then, right in the eye of this tornado of birds I see a dark shape lying lengthwise on a branch. It's a common nighthawk so well camouflaged that I have a difficult time picking it up again when I look away. It's not in a protective crouch, but awakening with its eyes half-open, seemingly oblivious to the alarmed birds. It had probably been there all day, and now I have one more bird for the column.

After a while the birds give up, sensing the intruder poses no threat. I study the nighthawk with the 10-power glasses, and it seems I can almost reach out and touch it. It turns its head and opens its big pink mouth wide, almost like a yawn. At 8:30 I hear,

then see several other nighthawks overhead, repeatedly sounding their loud calls, which to me sound like *paint! paint! paint! paint!* The nighthawk launches from the branch, opens its great narrow wings and joins the others coursing by. *Paint! paint!* it cries.



COMMON
NIGHTHAWK

Well, I'm too tired to start painting now, but I could not pass up an invitation to spend a day with the birds whose songs proclaim that every day is rare indeed, especially when spent among their ranks.

Big-League Effort

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

“IF YOU BUILD IT, they will come.” This phrase was made famous in the 1989 movie *Field of Dreams*, and now, 12 years later, it was I — not Kevin Costner — standing in a field hearing those words. Of course, the voice I was hearing wasn't mysterious; the speaker, Scott Singer, was standing right in front of me. And I didn't have to ask, “Build what? Who will come?” I knew exactly what he was talking about. Create the right habitat, and the wildlife will come. Create a place where pheasants and rabbits can thrive, and they will.

Singer, Wildlife Habitat Biologist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Columbia and Montour counties, grew up in northern Ohio and saw this firsthand. As he stood looking out over the field, a recently completed field border cut behind him, Singer declared that 20 years ago

Ohio looked a lot like Pennsylvania does now. People are wondering where all the pheasants have gone, just as they did in Ohio back then. And now, as they did in Ohio, people are realizing that something must be done if these birds and other farmland animals are ever to become plentiful again.

On a chilly Saturday in April, a group of people gathered to find out what they could do to help create more suitable habitat for farmland wildlife. A dozen experts were at the PP&L Montour Preserve in Washingtonville, Montour County, to tell the 50 farmers and other landowners how they can help.

One of those experts was PGC Wildlife Biologist Scott Klinger. According to Klinger, there are several reasons why farmland game species habitat and numbers are dwindling. Since 1964, in 20 southeast Pennsylvania counties, 700,000 acres of farmland have been converted into housing developments, shopping centers or otherwise paved. While 2½ million acres still

remain, they are quickly being developed and what is left is becoming fragmented. In the last 10 years in Lancaster County, 60,000 acres of some of the best farmland east of the Mississippi have been taken out of agricultural use.

Furthermore,



PGC Land Management Officer KEITH SANFORD shows a group of landowners a fencerow that could be cut to create more suitable habitat for rabbits and pheasants.

Holding several types of warm season grasses, LMO KEITH SANFORD talks to landowners about different ways to help create cover for farmland wildlife.

changes in crops and livestock are also having profound effects on wildlife habitat. In Pennsylvania, corn, alfalfa hay and soybeans are increasing, while small grains and pasture grazing are declining. Alfalfa hay, which is high in protein for dairy cows, is grown statewide, and cutting often starts in early May, when pheasants are nesting in the cover. Small grains, such as winter wheat, provide ideal cover for farmland wildlife, and aren't harvested until later in the summer — after pheasants have hatched.

According to Klinger, there are several things farmers can do to help create cover for wildlife, including:

- Plant no-till crops to reduce soil erosion
- Maintain field borders in 20- to 50-foot wide strips of grasses and legumes by disking these borders every three years to maintain herbaceous cover and to control invasive plants
- Fence livestock at least 35 feet from streams and wetlands
- Establish and maintain brushy hedgerows between fields for winter cover
- Plant one-acre or larger food plots of corn or sorghum close to winter cover
- Delay mowing 20 percent of hayfields until July 15 to allow farmland wildlife to nest
- Leave five to 10 rows of corn, soybeans and grains uncut along field borders adjacent to winter cover
- Don't plow or disk harvested crop fields during the fall, to leave waste grain for winter food

For landowners in central and southern Pennsylvania, there's CREP. "Farm the best — CREP the rest." Klinger just can't say that enough. CREP stands for the Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Pro-



gram, a partnership between the USDA and the various states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The primary purpose is to reduce the flow of nutrients and other pollutants into the Chesapeake Bay. Some huge side benefits, however, are that it will help improve water quality, reduce soil erosion and improve wildlife habitat, all while increasing income on marginal farmland. The goal in 20 Pennsylvania counties is to enroll 100,000 acres of highly erodible cropland and marginal pastureland.

CREP pays landowners \$56 to more than \$200 per acre annually to place these lands in conservation cover plantings. In addition, landowners may receive 100 percent cost share to establish practices and, for certain practices, one time bonus payments. Once enrolled, the grasses, shrubs or trees must be maintained for the life of the contract (10-15 years). No trees or forage may be harvested, and no maintenance mowing is permitted during the primary nesting season (April 1-July 15). Wildlife habitat biologists are available to prepare plans and help get cover on the ground.

In general, here are some practices landowners may implement to help wildlife:

- Plant trees, shrubs and grasses
- Incorporate wildlife needs in timber cutting operations
- Build brushpiles
- Stabilize stream banks
- Build and install nesting boxes
- Create a shallow water impoundment
- Plant native vegetation
- Restore wetlands
- Install deer fencing

Other USDA programs that landowners can take part in were made known to the group by Paul Yankovich, USDA-NRCS Supervisory District Conservationist. The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is for people who want to develop and improve fish and wildlife habitat on their lands. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers financial, educational and technical assistance for conservation practices in areas of particular concern.

Private forests less than 1,000 acres can be enrolled in the Forestry Incentive Program to enhance existing forests, plant trees and improve tree stands. In addition, landowners can receive technical assistance on forest management through the Forest Stewardship Program administered by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Bureau of Forestry. Resource Conservation and Development Councils are local representatives who work together on a community level to improve recreational facilities, sewage, water and roads, and on a rural level to encourage soil quality and reduce erosion and sediments.

Landowners with potential restoration sites can enroll in the Wetlands Reserve Program to provide fish and wildlife habitats, improve water quality, reduce flood-

ing and protect biological diversity. More information on these and other USDA programs may be obtained by contacting the USDA Service Center, State Cooperative Extension office and conservation district in your area. Information is also available on the web at www.nrcs.usda.gov.

Retired Game Commission wildlife biologist Lincoln "Abe" Lang used his years of grouse research to educate the listeners about forest wildlife habitat management. Studying grouse, Lang has learned what kinds of habitats and foods they prefer, and how to create those favored habitats. He says that clear-cutting is best, because it allows for the brushy, early successional cover that grouse prefer. He suggests making small clear-cuttings close together. Grapes, aspen and blueberries are favorite foods of grouse that can be planted or encouraged to grow through clear-cutting.

The Game Commission's Farm-Game and Safety Zone programs are designated for farmers and other landowners interested in providing for wildlife. Cooperating landowners allow hunting and trapping on their properties, and in exchange, receive services from the Game Commission, such as tree and shrub seedlings and technical habitat management assistance, increased law enforcement, safety zone and other informational signs, and a subscription to *Game News*. To find out how to enroll in these programs, contact the Game Commission region office in your area.

While making decisions about management on your property, you should consider the property limitations, your interests and experience, the ownership and use of the land and the resources available. Contact the conservation district in your area to find out what technical and financial assistance may be available. □



FIELD NOTES



Valuable Commodity

Out of 142 bluebird nest boxes monitored in Forest and Warren counties, 45 were missing. Who would have thought that bird houses would be "high theft" items?

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE



They're Great!

BRADFORD — Ross Guava from Sonestown in Sullivan County was building something in his yard last spring when his hammering attracted a hen turkey, which in turn brought in a strutting tom. Russ's wife, Nancy, brought some cornflakes out in a bowl and set it down in the yard, and they were surprised when the gobbler strutted over and ate all the cereal.

— WCO WILLIAM BOWER, TROY

Pecking Order

MERCER/VENANGO — Four years ago the crew at Shenango Reservoir erected an osprey platform, and during that first year ospreys did successfully nest on the structure. The second and third years a pair of Canada geese used the platform, but this year a pair of bald eagles nested on it. I noted that the geese nested back on the ground and the ospreys moved 500 yards away and nested on another platform.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Never Thought of That

CRAWFORD — I was doing a program for some Cub Scouts when one youngster asked why I wear a gun. I explained to him that conservation officers carry firearms for the same reason that other law enforcement officers do. He then asked, "Do you take the bad guys to the nature jail?"

— WCO MARK A. ALLEGRO, MEADVILLE

Another Happy Customer

GREENE — Deputy Ed Smith and I responded to a call about a groundhog that had made it into a car dealership by riding in the undercarriage of a trade-in vehicle. After chasing this "car-smart" groundhog as it hid under car after car in the lot, we realized the critter knew more about cars than most mechanics. We never did catch it, and we chuckled thinking that the chuck came in a used car but is probably leaving in a brand new one.

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

More Calling Practice

POTTER — I spoke with one group of hunters on the first day of gobbler season who were disheartened because they had not seen or heard any turkeys. A half mile down the road, however, I had to swerve off the road to avoid a gobbler in full strut. Later that same morning I talked to a hunter who didn't call in a gobbler but had a flock of geese come in to his calls.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE,
CROSS FORKS

Pound for Pound

LMO Lupinsky and I noticed a least weasel, which is about the size of a chipmunk, carrying a mole in its jaws across a road in Bradford County. We said that the feat would be like a person carrying a deer in his jaws.

— LMO JOHN C. SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS



Mom Knows Best

MERCER — I was presenting a wildlife program to first grade students at Commodore Perry School when a young girl asked, "Do you know what skunk cabbage is?" I said that I did, but she gave me her description. "My mom says it's what skunks eat to make more spray." I told her that it kind of smells like a skunk, and maybe that's where it gets its name, but that I'm not sure skunks eat it. I don't think I convinced her, though, as Mom's version makes a better story.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Down the Generations

TRAINING SCHOOL — In self-defense class WCO Tim Grenoble was demonstrating how to escort someone taken into custody, so I showed him the "mother escort" technique, which is placing your hand above the elbow and squeezing a little nerve there. WCO Grenoble was impressed when I demonstrated it on him, but then he asked if I had ever heard of the "grandmother escort." He gently grabbed my earlobe and lifted up, which promptly brought me off my feet. I wonder if these techniques are in the training manual?

— TRAINEE BETH A. FIFE, HARRISBURG

Good Advice

YORK — Check the Game Commission's website now to find an HTE course in your area. Planning ahead now can save frustration later on.

— WCO GUY HANSEN, RED LION

Beating the Odds

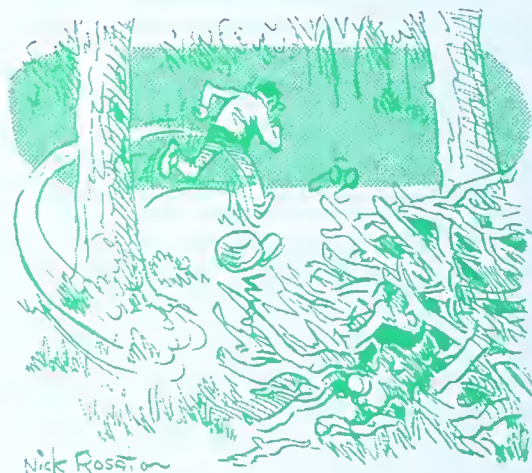
After reading WCO Dooley's Field Note in the January issue about a hunter getting the same license number two years in a row, Jack Faulkner from Pittsburgh wrote me explaining that for years he and his two buddies have been applying for antlerless deer licenses in the same envelope. On three of the five years between 1994 and 1998 they received the numbers 346, 347 and 348. Jack, if I send you a dollar will you buy a lottery ticket for me?

— LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPERVISOR TIM MARKS, MILROY

Good Point

TRAINING SCHOOL — It has been extremely challenging trying to learn the multitude of bird and tree species, but as Trainee Dave Allen put it, "At least the trees don't fly away before you can find them in the field guide."

— TRAINEE SCOTT S. FREDERICK, HARRISBURG



Close Encounter

JUNIATA — Joe Barnes of Thompsontown was hiking near home early last spring when he stopped to investigate strange noises coming from a brushpile. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness after peering into the tangle, he realized he was face-to-face with a large bear with two cubs. Joe quietly excused himself for the intrusion and opted for a more formal introduction some other time.

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE

Not on the Menu

FOREST — One day during spring turkey season I was sitting on a logging road, listening to a hunter call to a vocal gobbler. I heard crunching leaves nearby and thought it was another hunter stalking the bird, until a coyote walked onto the road less than 30 yards away and stared right at me. After several seconds, though, the coyote lost interest and slowly walked away. I chuckled, thinking that the coyote, expecting to see a tasty turkey, had to be disappointed in getting an eyeful of yours truly.

— WCO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Omnivorous

MONROE — Deputy Greg Gorski witnessed a crow swoop down and snatch a mouse in a field, and then he watched as the bird flew back to its perch and begin eating it just like a hawk would. Many people don't realize that crows are predators.

— WCO MARK S. RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER

Almost Outfoxed

BEDFORD — I responded to a call about a fox with mange hanging around the courtyard of a motel, but by the time I arrived it was gone. The manager said that the fox had crossed the highway, and then I spotted it traveling on a steep hillside along the PA Turnpike. I went after the animal but it eluded me, so I parked my vehicle under a Turnpike overpass, contemplating my next move and wishing the fox would show itself again. It did. The fox seemingly fell from the sky and landed on the road in front of me as it apparently jumped over the side of the overpass.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Obedience Class

DAUPHIN — I was transporting animal mounts to the region office and had stopped to get gas when a man filling up behind me asked how I managed to keep the river otter looking at him so calm.

— WCO MARK S. FAIR, MIDDLETOWN

Popular

TRAINING SCHOOL — For dendrology class we're required to identify 66 species of trees in the field without using notes or a field guide. I had the course as a forestry student at Penn State, so I'm better prepared than many of my classmates. I've suddenly gained a lot of friends.

— TRAINEE TRAVIS PUGH, HARRISBURG



High Price

SOMERSET — I was setting a bear trap in my district when my vehicle got stuck, so I called neighboring WCO Stan Norris for help. After Stan arrived he insisted on taking a photo before hooking on the tow strap. I later noticed the photo making its rounds at the Southwest Region Office. In the future, when WCO Norris asks for my assistance I'll have a video camera ready.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Earplugs the Next Trip

PERRY — Deputies Dave Wolf, Ken Lancaster and I went to Dave's cabin in Lycoming County to fish, and while playing cards one evening Dave kept telling us about the large bear population in the area. Late that night I was awakened by a loud, low-pitched, guttural sound that at first I figured could only have been made by a huge hungry bear lurking around outside. Turned out, if there were any bears around, I'm sure they would have been scared away by Ken's snoring.

— WCO WILLIAM M. WILLIAMS, MILLERSTOWN

Cops and Robbers

TRAINING SCHOOL — During defensive tactics class, Trainee Jason DeCoskey managed to attach both handcuffs with the key-holes facing each other to one wrist. After a lot of effort, we were able to get him free, and now Jason knows not to play with things he doesn't completely understand.

— TRAINEE DAVID P. ALLEN, HARRISBURG

Best Left Unsaid

VENANGO — My deputy and I were checking hunters on the first day of gobbler season when one fellow said he didn't see or hear a thing. We told him he was in a good area, but he said that we were just saying that because we worked for the Game Commission. I don't think he would have believed us even if we told him that just after we left, right around the corner, we spotted a gobbler with a long beard strutting in the middle of the road.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY



Second Door on the Left

GREENE — Deputy Doug Kerr called me to remove a beaver that had entered one of the offices at the coal mine where he works. After we got the beaver back to the pond where it came from, I asked Doug if he had any idea what it was doing in the office. "He must have heard that we were hiring and got lost looking for the personnel office," Doug said.

— WCO RANDY R. CRAGO, CARMICHAELS

Look Before You Leap

While fishing under a bridge on the Driftwood Branch of Sinnemahoning Creek, PGC forester Kirk Bainey heard a loud splash and then noticed a furry animal rise to the surface and swim to shore. Kirk walked over to investigate and found a soaked and shivering rabbit. Evidently, the cottontail had wandered onto the bridge and apparently mistook a drain hole for a burrow. Kirk dried the high diving rabbit and it was soon on its way.

— ASSISTANT REGIONAL FORESTER BRYCE L. HALL, RIDGWAY

Good Catch

FULTON — Waterways Conservation Officer Kadin Thompson and I noticed several fishermen gathered on the breast of the dam at Meadowgrounds Lake on SGL 53, so we started out across it to warn them that, due to safety reasons, fishing was not permitted from the dam. When we got there, however, one young fellow, Matthew Junkins of Dillsburg, was hooked into a big one, judging from the way his rod was bent. Much to our surprise, however, it wasn't a fish at all, but a duck. It seems an oldsquaw hen had become entangled in some discarded fishing line, and Matt managed to snag the line and reel in the nearly exhausted duck.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Double Talk

WAYNE — WCO Dan Figured received a call that the owners of a van parked in a wooded area were up to "no good." Dan waited around for several hours, and when the "culprits" came out of the woods he asked them what they were up to. It turned out that the group was a survey team doing work in the area. Dan, realizing that he had been the victim of a practical joke, politely talked his way out of the situation, and departed only slightly embarrassed. So, Dan, now what do you think about that boring "Verbal Communications Skills 101" class at the training school?

— WCO FRANK J. DOOLEY, TYLER HILL

Knight in Shining Armor

SCHUYLKILL — While passing through Tower City a lady waved me down and said she needed help. Her lawn mower had just run out of gas and she couldn't get the gas cap off to fill it. Glad to help, I loosened it, but then left before someone showed up with a jar of pickles.

— WCO STEVE HOWER, PINE GROVE

In a Real Jam

TRAINING SCHOOL — During dendrology class we found a squirrel that had gotten its head stuck in a beech tree cavity and died, which was surprising knowing what agile and skillful climbers they are.

— TRAINEE JOHN M. PAPSON, HARRISBURG

Now a Believer

MONROE — During spring gobbler season I called a mature tom to within 20 yards while wearing a blaze orange hat, despite some hunters telling me it can't be done.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH,
ALBRIGHTSVILLE

Pass the Ben Gay

TRAINING SCHOOL — I've always prided myself on staying in shape, but after a full day of defensive tactics training I have to admit, I was sore in muscles I didn't even know I had.

— TRAINEE JOHN W. VEYLUPEK, HARRISBURG

Oh, Well

While PGC Federal Aid Supervisor Steve Smithonic was working with students from Lake-Lehman High School on a habitat improvement project, the group was dismayed to find several items strewn about their site. The students immediately went into action by picking up a basketball, tennis balls and clothing until a class of elementary students converged on the area to participate in a scavenger hunt. It seems that the items were part of their activity, and everyone got a good laugh out of the situation.

— WES JOSEPH G. WENZEL, NORTHEAST
REGION, DALLAS



No Respect

TRAINING SCHOOL — While on a field trip for dendrology class one of my classmates took a "direct hit" from a Baltimore oriole perched in the tree we were identifying. Be glad that cows don't fly, Jason.

— TRAINEE GERALD L. KAPRAL, HARRISBURG

Real Funny

TIOGA — I was in the parking lot at the Northcentral Region Office, waiting for WCO Shire so we could attend a big game measuring session, when a man asked what I was working on. I told him I was going to be measuring deer antlers and he replied, "Oh, how do you catch them to measure their antlers?"

— WCO JOHN J. SNYDER, WELLSBORO

Appreciated

BEDFORD — The support I've received for my HTE classes last year was tremendous. The Bedford WalMart donated .22 cartridges, shotgun shells and clay targets; Chapman's Run Hunting Club donated two new .22 rifles; Snider's Road Kill Café gave two gun cases; and Jerry Ritchey of Juniata Trade provided free junior hunting licenses to all graduates of the classes. Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the Everett Sportsmens Club for the use of their facilities, and their members who are instructors. This group certifies an average of 125 new hunters each year.

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

WCOs tackle unlawful ATV use/ poaching

ON A SUNDAY last May, Northeast Region WCOs, along with Newport Township police officers, issued 43 citations for the unlawful use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and dirt bikes on Earth Conservancy lands in Luzerne County.

As a result of this extended and cooperative effort, citations were issued to ATV and dirt bike operators who were riding their vehicles on Earth Conservancy property enrolled in the Game Commission's Forest-Game Cooperative program. The 12,000-acre conservancy property is subject to the same restrictions as state game lands. The property is open to public hunting, hiking and other outdoor activities, and the commission is in agreement with the owner (Earth Conservancy), to enforce all laws and regulations that pertain to those lands.

WCOs and deputies planned the enforcement operation after talking with officials of Earth Conservancy and Chief Carl Smith of the Newport Township Police Department about the unlawful ATV and dirt bike operation on the conservancy land and on public roadways in the township.

Game Commission posters indicating that the land is "closed to motorized vehicles" have been prominently displayed since the land was signed up under the Forest-Game program, Wildlife Conservation Officer Tom Swiech said, but to no avail. At several locations, officers noticed ATV operators pass within feet of these

posters, totally ignoring the warnings.

"Regular and repeated use of ATVs, dirt bikes and SUVs can and has caused significant damage to much of the reclaimed and freshly planted areas of this land," said Barry Warner, PGC Northeast Region Director. "If this activity is not curtailed, it will lead to serious damage to the environment and major erosion problems. This type of activity in wooded areas, especially in the spring, can also disturb and harass nesting wildlife," Warner added.

Richard Larned, Law Enforcement Supervisor for the Northeast Region said, "our enforcement efforts will continue at full force until the problem is resolved. We will not tolerate abuse of this magnificent parcel of land. This is a very serious problem and we will continue to address it."

In another matter, in District Justice Jolanna Krawitz's office in Saylorsburg, Monroe County, Game Commission WCOs filed charges against several individuals for their alleged part in what officers are calling "an elaborate operation in the illegal sale of wildlife."

Monroe County WCOs Mark Rutkowski and Vic Rosa filed charges against David J. Frantz Sr. and his son, David Frantz Jr., for 80 counts of buying or selling game and wildlife.

The duo also has been charged with the unlawful taking or possession of game or wildlife and resisting inspection. If found guilty on all counts, the defendants face fines in excess of \$41,000 and forfeiture of their hunt-

ing privileges within this state.

Also charged was Leonard Rickley, also from Molasses Valley Road, Kunkletown. Rickley pled guilty before District Justice Robert Perfetti, East Stroudsburg, Monroe County, to the charges of buying and selling game and wildlife.

According to the charges, it is alleged that David Frantz Sr. manufactured jerky and bologna from deer, many of which were killed illegally in closed season. This activity allegedly occurred at a local butcher shop and in David Frantz Sr.'s home in Kunkletown. David Frantz Jr. allegedly then would deliver the processed meat to Rickley, who sold it to workers at a plant in East Stroudsburg. It is alleged that Rickley then would return the proceeds to the Frantz's. It is charged that the majority of the sales occurred during September through January each year.

During their investigation, WCOs Rosa and Rutkowski received information that as many as several hundred deer were killed over the past few years, allegedly in order to supply the Frantz with venison for their illegal business. Sources indicated that as many as three deer per week were illegally shot in order to keep up with the demand for the processed meat.

"Information from concerned citizens and sportsmen groups in the West End section of Monroe County initiated this investigation," Larner said. "Cracking this case was no easy task. Our officers worked day and night on it for the better part of a year, along with the outstanding assistance of the Pennsylvania State Police and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Enforcement Division. Without the partnership, dedication and commitment of the local residents and law enforcement officers, this case would not have been solved."

"Buying or selling game or wildlife is a violation of the Game and Wildlife Code," Warner said. "Those individuals who bought processed venison from the Frantz are encouraged to come forward with any information they may have about this case."

"This case demonstrates how some individuals have blatant disregard for the wildlife of this commonwealth and neither we, nor the sportsmen and women of this state, will tolerate this type of activity."

Anyone with information about this or other wildlife crimes is encouraged to contact the Game Commission's Northeast Region Office at 1-877-877-9357 (toll-free) or 570-675-1143.

Elk license applications being accepted

WITH THE STATE'S first modern-day elk hunt in 70 years slated for this November, the Game Commission has begun accepting applications for 30 elk licenses to be made available.

Applications are available from "The Outdoor Shop," which is posted on www.pgc.state.pa.us. Applicants

may complete and submit the form online.

"Completing applications on-line will give the applicants peace-of-mind, knowing that they will be included in the public drawing," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "Also, on-line applica-

tions will save the agency administrative costs.”

Hunters who wish to apply by mail may print the application from the website or use the application form included in the *2001-02 Pennsylvania Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations*, complete it and mail it to: Pennsylvania Game Commission, Elk License Application, P.O. Box 61890, Harrisburg, PA 17106-1890.

A \$10 non-refundable fee must be submitted with the application. Forms submitted through the mail must be accompanied by a check or money order (do not send cash) made payable to “Pennsylvania Game Commission,” and must be received in the Game Commission’s post office box by August 24. On-line applications must be accompanied by a credit card payment (VISA, MasterCard, Discover and American Express accepted), and must be submitted by September 14. No Game Commission office will accept hand-delivered applications.

“By law, only one application is permitted per person,” Ross said. “If a person submits more than one application, all of their applications will be ineligible and the applicant will be subject to prosecution.”

Individuals are not required to purchase a hunting license to apply for the drawing. However, those who are drawn for an elk license will be required to purchase the appropriate resident or nonresident general hunting license and attend a mandatory orientation program by the Game Commission before being permitted to purchase the elk license. The elk license fees are \$25 for residents and \$250 for nonresidents.

The public drawing will be held on September 29 as part of an elk expo that will be held in communities within the elk range in northcentral

Pennsylvania. The exact time and location will be announced later.

“All applications will be put into one container for the public drawing,” Ross said. “We then will draw enough applications to award 30 elk licenses. The first 15 will be awarded antlered elk licenses, and the next 15 will be awarded antlerless elk licenses.”

Of the 30, up to two may be awarded to nonresidents. This number is based on the percentage of nonresident general hunting licenses sold during the previous year, about seven percent.

Those applying for an elk license will have the option to indicate their preference for either an antlered or antlerless elk license, or they may select “either.” For those who select “antlered only,” if they are drawn after the antlered licenses are allocated, they will not receive an elk license. For those who do receive an antlered elk license, they will not be permitted to re-apply for future elk hunting opportunities for five years.

Applicants also will be given the opportunity to identify their preference for an elk management area, or they may select “any.” If drawn and their preference for a hunting area is already filled, they will be assigned a specific area by the Game Commission. To assist applicants in making this decision, information about the elk management areas is posted on the PGC website along with the application, and is included in the 2001-02 Digest.

Under the approved season, there will be 14 elk management areas established within Pennsylvania’s 835-square-mile elk range. Elk Management Area 15 was included to address elk conflicts outside the elk range.

No elk hunting will be allowed in the vicinity of the official elk view-

ing area on Winslow Hill, Benezette Township, Elk County.

The Board also approved a measure to permit individuals, especially those who live in the elk range or are familiar with the elk herd, to serve as guides for those who receive an elk license. Guides may provide assistance in lo-

cating or tracking elk, but may not harvest the elk. Guide permits will be \$10 for residents and \$25 for nonresidents. Applications for guide permits may be obtained from the Game Commission's Harrisburg headquarters. Game Commission employees will not serve as elk hunt guides.

Project to improve water quality in Indiana County approved

THE BOARD unanimously approved a reclamation lease with Laurel Energy of Latrobe, for a 35-acre tract of SGL 276 in Indiana County that will improve the water quality for a Blacklick Creek tributary. The tributary's water quality currently is being affected by past mining activities.

"Water quality is an important issue, not only for people, but also for wildlife," said Vern Ross. "We are pleased that Laurel Energy is able to assist the Game Commission with this project to enhance the wildlife habitat and local watershed."

Under this lease agreement, Laurel Energy will reclaim and revegetate an abandoned surface mine on SGL 276. The company will eliminate 1,350 feet of highwall and nearly seven acres of an unreclaimed surface mine pit area. Further, Laurel Energy will construct water discharge facilities that will allow better quality water to flow into the Blacklick Creek tributary. The remainder of the 35-acre lease will be used to provide access to the site, construction of erosion and sedimentation controls and operational support.

The reclamation fill provided by Laurel will be placed in a synthetic liner that will ensure no additional

degradation of the ground water occurs. The fill will be taken from a nearby site where Laurel is developing a deepmine access and haul road.

As part of the lease, Laurel will pay the Game Commission an upfront fee of \$24,000. Subsequent fees will be 25 cents per ton of reclamation fill. In addition, any marketable timber inadvertently impacted by the reclamation project will be paid to the Game Commission by Laurel at twice the stumpage value.

Ross noted that the project is in direct support of Governor Tom Ridge's "Growing Greener Initiatives" and will be conducted in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

In other action, the Board approved an oil and gas lease on 62.26 acres on SGL 287 in Madison Township, Armstrong County, that ultimately will provide about \$250,000 in revenues for the Game Fund over the gas production life of the lease.

SGL 287 currently contains 1,934 acres. However, of the 303 acres added to SGL 287 in 1998, the Game Commission was able to acquire only 62.26 acres of the oil, gas and other mineral development rights. The owners of the rights under the remain-

ing 241 acres have been exercising their rights to drill for oil and gas.

Several privately owned active wells in the area are inadvertently drawing from the 62.26-acre oil and gas field in Game Commission ownership. In order to protect the Game Commission-owned rights, the Board agreed to lease this parcel to Kriebel Resources of Clarion to drill within

the 62.26 acres, ensuring that all the gas removed from beneath the lease area is credited to the Game Commission.

In addition, Kriebel has agreed to pay a yearly rental rate of \$20 per acre for any undeveloped acreage, and to reclaim and revegetate all of its oil and gas wells on SGL 287 to specifications set by the Game Commission.

Road use status changes approved

IN OTHER LAND management related actions, the Board changed the road use status of five Game Commission roads to provide hunters greater access. The changes are:

- About one mile of road beginning at an existing gate and parking area along the Hooks Road and extending to a parking area and gate on SGL 260, Salem Township, Luzerne County, will be open from the beginning of archery season until the end of the extended season in January. The road also will be open during the spring gobbler season;

- About 2.75 miles of road beginning at an existing gate near State Road 35048 (Salem Mountain Road) and extending to a parking area on SGL 300, Jefferson Township, Lackawanna County, will be open from the beginning of archery season until the end of the extended season in January. The road also will be open during the spring gobbler season;

- About three-tenths of a mile of road beginning at State Road 3047

(Vintondale/Twin Rocks road), approximately four-tenths of a mile from the intersection with Route 271, and extending south to a parking lot on SGL 79 in Cambria County, will be open from the beginning of archery season until the end of the extended season in January;

- About one mile of road from the south side of State Road 2014 (Jersey Hollow Road), approximately one mile east of the Fayette/Somerset line, and extending to a parking lot on SGL 111, Somerset County, will be open from the beginning of archery season to the end of the extended deer season in January; and

- About one mile of road beginning on the south side of South Huntingdon Township Road 317, where the township road intersects with SGL 296, and extending south to a parking area on SGL 296, Westmoreland County, will be open from the beginning of archery season to the end of the extended deer season in January.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

2,100 acres added to SGL system

AT THE APRIL meeting, the Board unanimously approved several actions that will increase the state game land systems by more than 2,100 acres. Of the total, nearly 2,000 acres were offered by the Wildlands Conservancy, including a 1,425-acre tract in Pike County that will be designated a new state game land.

"The Game Commission's ability to purchase and preserve lands for wildlife and for public hunting and trapping has always been limited by rising property values and, during certain tight financial times, the limited availability of agency funds," said Executive Director Vern Ross. "However, with the license increase approved by the General Assembly and Governor Tom Ridge in 1998, and with the commitment of the Board of Commissioners to maximize land acquisition efforts, the agency is able to work more closely with partners such as the Wildlands Conservancy, to preserve additional wildlife habitats."

Based in Emmaus, Northampton County, the Wildlands Conservancy for years has played an important role in preserving lands for wildlife and outdoor recreation in eastern Pennsylvania.

"The Wildlands Conservancy is in the business of preserving land," said Dennis Collins, Wildlands Conservancy Land Protection director. "In providing these tracts to the Game Commission, we are confident that they will be managed professionally and with the utmost attention given to habitat improvements for wildlife, and will be available for public use, including hunting and trapping."

Ross noted that the Ecologically Concerned of Zelienople also helped

the Game Commission secure a critically important 28-acre interior holding on SGL 95 in Butler County.

"In addition to conservation organizations, there are many individuals and companies who offer or donate lands to the Game Commission as part of a desire to ensure our rich hunting and trapping heritage can be enjoyed by future generations," Ross said.

The Game Commission has been purchasing state game lands since 1920. The state game land system currently contains about 1.4 million acres. Under state law, the Game Commission is allowed to spend no more than \$400 per acre, with certain exceptions regarding interior holdings.

"The state game land system represents a tangible asset that hunters and trappers can literally point to as a product of their license fees," Ross said. "In addition to the bountiful game and wildlife in our state, this is one more reason to view the price of a Pennsylvania hunting or furtaking license as a bargain."

Following is a county-by-county breakdown of the transactions.

Berks County: 13.5 acres adjacent to SGL 106, from the Wildlands Conservancy for \$5,400.

Butler County: 28-acre abandoned railroad grade in Venango Township from the Ecologically Concerned of Zelienople Inc. for \$18,200. The tract is an interior holding on SGL 95, which currently contains 9,348 acres. After an evaluation of comparable sales, it was determined that the price for this linear tract is consistent with provisions of the Game and Wildlife Code, which authorizes the Game Commission to pay

what it considers a fair and reasonable price for interior holdings.

Cambria/Blair counties: a land exchange with Cooney Brothers Coal Company that will result in a win-win situation for hunters and trappers, wildlife and local residents in Cambria and Blair counties. As part of the exchange, the Game Commission will transfer a 3-acre tract on SGL 108, Cambria County, to the coal company so that it may construct and implement an acid mine drainage treatment facility. The facility is part of a cooperative effort between the Game Commission, the state Department of Environmental Protection Mining Office in Ebensburg and Cooney Brothers to abate the ongoing pollution within the Brubaker Run and Clearfield Creek watersheds.

In return, Cooney Brothers will transfer to the Game Commission a 25-acre tract in Blair County, which is adjacent to SGL 198. The tract will provide another access route to the game lands.

Carbon/Luzerne counties: 544 acres in Luzerne County and Carbon County, from the Wildlands Conservancy for \$150,000. The tract provides frontage along the Lehigh River, and previously was closed to public hunting and trapping. It will become part of SGL 91.

Erie County: 60 acres adjacent to

SGL 109, from Mary Kuhns for \$24,000. The tract contains 45 acres of farmland and three wetlands recently constructed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Jefferson County: a donation from Strishock Coal Company of one-half interest in 372 acres currently part of SGL 54. The Game Commission acquired this portion of SGL 54 in the 1930s. But, as part of a tax sale in the 1960s, the coal company acquired a one-half interest in the tract.

Lycoming County: a donation of 10.7 acres adjacent to SGL 133, from Robert L. Dorman of Endicott, New York. A native of Williamsport, Dorman offered the donation to the Game Commission "to ensure that the land remains open to public hunting and trapping, as well as those who enjoy the outdoors."

Pike County: 1,424.8 acres from the Wildlands Conservancy for \$569,920. The property will comprise a new state game land, SGL 327. The tract has an extensive wetlands complex, and was originally purchased by the Wildlands Conservancy for \$650 per acre. The Game Commission is paying the Wildlands Conservancy \$400 per acre. As the purchase price exceeds \$300,000, the transaction must be approved by the General Assembly and Governor before being finalized.

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Alt honored with Lenny Green/Inky Moore award

DR. GARY ALT has been honored with the Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation and Audubon Pennsylvania's first Lenny Green/Inky Moore Conservation Educator Award. Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the award was presented at the 2001 Conservation Achievement Awards Banquet in April.

The award is named after Leonard A. Green and Enoch S. "Inky" Moore, renowned conservationists who spent their lives educating people on the importance of preserving natural resources. Both served as PFBC commissioners before their deaths in 2000. A conservationist and fly-fisher of state and national renown, Moore's service as a member of the PFBC was of unparalleled integrity and expertise. His career was marked by an extraordinary commitment to conservation and the protection, conservation and enhancement of Pennsylvania's

fishery and outdoor resources.

Green served as the member of the PFBC from 1975 until 1991. He was a key player in the development of the landmark resource-based management policies and programs known as OPERATION FUTURE. A conservation leader of state and national importance, he was a strong supporter of the "Resource First" philosophy that has guided the Commission and its staff for many years.

PFBC Executive Director Peter A. Colangelo praised the selection of Dr. Alt for the Green/Moore Conservation Educator Award, noting that Alt shares the same dedication to creating public awareness epitomized by the award's namesakes. "Gary Alt is extremely deserving of this award both because of his own knowledge of wildlife management and the passion he has demonstrated in sharing that understanding with others. Both Inky Moore and Lenny Green believed strongly in passing their personal expertise on to others, a philosophy practiced by Dr. Alt." Alt is best known for his work for the Pennsylvania Game Commission with black bears. In 1999, he took on a new challenge, heading the Game Commission's Deer Management Section. In that role, he has addressed thousands of Pennsylvanians over the past two years on deer and deer management.



DR. GARY ALT was recently honored with the first Lenny Green/Inky Moore Conservation Educator Award, in recognition of his commitment to public awareness and education.

PGC's Indiana bat research highlighted

IN 1997, Game Commission wildlife technician Cal Butchkoski found Indiana bats using an old church at Canoe Creek State Park as a maternity roost. The discovery represented the first known instance of Indiana bats — a federally endangered species — using any sort of manmade structure for such a roost. (Until Butchkoski's discovery, Indiana bats had been known to use only trees for maternity sites.) What made the discovery so exciting is that it raised the possibility that Indiana bats may be using other buildings as maternity sites, which could turn out to be a valuable tool for managing and protecting them.

With endangered species funds from the USFWS, efforts to learn just how significant the Canoe Creek Bat Church was as an Indiana bat maternity site got underway in June 1999. Researchers went into the church attic and searched for Indianas among the thousands of little brown bats in the attic. The entry and subsequent visits, it turned out, represented the first time anybody had knowingly entered an Indiana bat maternity roost.

"It was a tough job finding Indianas among the little browns," Butchkoski explained. "The attic is very hot and has poor ventilation, but it is an ideal place to conduct research. Being in the attic with thousands of bats wasn't a problem. They're really very passive creatures.

"Indianas can be distinguished from the little brown bats because of a slight pelage difference; Indianas are somewhat grayer. When I get one in hand, I verify its identity by looking at three small anatomical characteristics," he said.

From June 1999 to July 2000 29

Indiana bats were found using the church attic. Each was banded on the forearm, so long-term roost and hibernaculum preferences can be monitored. In addition, transmitters were glued onto seven (six females and one male) and their movements were monitored daily and nightly to provide information on bat behavior and habitat use. Transmitters weigh about half a gram and fall off within two weeks.

During the study, one of the females gave birth to a pup in the church, proving conclusively that Indianas were using the church attic as a maternity roost.

"Pennsylvania has been managing Indiana bats since the late 1970s," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "Much of that effort was identifying where Indiana bats hibernated and then ensuring those sites were protected. Our current study aims to improve our understanding of Indiana bats in Pennsylvania and will be beneficial to many wildlife management agencies in the Eastern and Midwestern United States.

"Canoe Creek has become one of America's most valuable proving grounds for new bat conservation techniques. We're on the cutting edge and drawing considerable attention. It's also important to mention that what we're learning now wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for the help of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, DCNR's Bureau of State Parks and Wild Resource Conservation Fund, and Bat Conservation International."

In addition to providing information on the habitats Indiana bats use in the summer, the monitoring of transmitter-tagged bats turned up sev-

eral major findings: the first Indiana bat maternity colony found in a building; the first maternity site shared by little brown and Indiana bats; and an Indiana bat entering the "Bat Condo."

Indiana bats have always been rare in Pennsylvania. The bat's primary range is in the Midwest. Loss of and disturbances to wintering sites — typically caves and mines — have plagued the small mammals. They're also impacted by the loss of summer maternity roosts, which are typically found under the loose bark of trees and in tree cavities. It's been estimated that as much as one-third of these sites are lost annually, when roost trees are blown or cut down.

Telemetry studies have shown that the Indiana bats using the Canoe Creek Bat Church roost also use trees as alternate or secondary day roosts, but their young were born and reared in the church. Research also documented that Indianas avoided nearby mountainsides, steep slopes and small woodlots. They foraged mainly in a large block of mature forest with short or gradual slopes and small streams. This type of habitat has been and continues to be very susceptible to development. That the bats preferred this setting could mean that their plight may be partly related to deforestation of lowland forests.

Butchkoski recently presented these findings in a research paper titled "The Ecology of Indiana Bats Using a Building as a Maternity Site," at the Indiana Bat Symposium in Lexington, Kentucky.

In the research paper, co-authored by PGC biologist Jerry Hassinger, Butchkoski discussed the threat posed by U.S. Route 22 to the Indiana bats using the Canoe Creek Bat Church maternity roost. The highway, he said, bisects the flight path used by bats to move from the church to major feed-

Much of the Game Commission's bat research has been done at Canoe Creek State Park, managed by the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Bureau of State Parks. Canoe Creek is where the Game Commission, in 1995, built its "Bat Condo," a structure that can accommodate up to 5,000 bats, and is near the equally renowned Canoe Creek Bat Church. Bought in 1993 by the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, the 19th century church houses the state's largest maternity colony of little brown bats — in excess of 20,000 — over summer. Also found on the park is the abandoned Hartman Limestone Mine, which harbors more than 20,000 hibernating bats over winter, making it the largest known bat hibernation site in the state.

ing areas. Indiana females with pups in the building crossed the highway up to eight times a night.

This summer, researchers will be taking a closer look at the potential impacts Route 22 may have on the Canoe Creek bat population. They also plan to monitor Indiana bat use of the condo. If this bat house proves to be an Indiana bat maternity roost, additional condos can be built and placed in suitable habitats for Indianas in Pennsylvania and other states.

In addition, Game Commission foresters will determine the forest composition of Indiana bat foraging areas identified during the study. From this, they'll develop a forest profile that may serve as an Indiana bat habitat identification guide for both government and private foresters. In the long run, this work will improve the Game Commission's ability to better manage this rare species.— Joe Kosack, PGC Information Specialist

Southwest region office to move

THE LAND EXCHANGE between the Game Commission and the Ligonier Valley School District has been finalized. The exchange involves the Game Commission deeding to the school district the current 6,552-

square-foot Southwest Region Office complex on West Main Street, and the 1.7-acre property on which the complex is situated. In return, the Game Commission will receive the 13,300-square-foot Fairfield Elementary School, on Route 711 North, and the 6.7-acre tract on which it is situated.

"This is a win-win for the Game Commission and the Ligonier Valley School District," said Harry Richards, Game Commission Southwest Region Director. "The exchange will give the school district a more centrally located site in downtown Ligonier, and the Game Commission will move into a facility that will provide much needed administrative office and storage space."

This additional space includes an auditorium and cafeteria, which will enable us to hold more regional events at the region office, both for agency training and public education. The extra acreage around the new region office will allow the agency to construct a wildlife interpretive trail for public education programs.



WESTMORELAND COUNTY Recorder of Deeds Tom Murphy receives the deed-transfer documents from Ligonier Valley School Board President Larry E. Rummel and Game Commission Southwest Region Director Harry Richards. Pictured, left to right, are Murphy, Rummel, Ligonier Valley School District Superintendent Dr. Stephen Whisdosh, Richards, and Jacquelyn Dattisman from the Game Commission's Bureau of Land Management office in Harrisburg.



EMIL BOROWSKI was posthumously recognized for 25 years of outstanding service as a Hunter-Trapper Ed instructor. Well known for doing community service in his hometown of Nanticoke, Luzerne County, as an HTE instructor, EMIL served with three WCOs, and in 1996 he was named one of the Northeast Region's "Outstanding HTE Instructors." PGC Wildlife Education Supervisor JOE WENZEL, middle, presented the award to EMIL'S widow, PAULA, and son, MIKE.

Middle Creek & Pymatuning art show/lectures

AN EXCITING lineup of programs is on tap at the Middle Creek and Pymatuning wildlife management areas this month.

At Middle Creek on July 18 & 19, renowned "moth man" John Laskowski is back to talk about his research and raising of moths and butterflies. After the formal presentation, John will (weather permitting) take the group outside and try to capture some of these fascinating and beautiful creatures. The programs are free and begin at 7:30 p.m.

On Aug. 3, 4 & 5, the Middle Creek Wildlife Art Show will be held. This, the 16th annual Middle Creek Wildlife Art Show, will feature the works of more than 30 of Pennsylvania's finest wildlife artists. The show runs from noon to 8 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 3; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., on

Saturday, Aug. 4; and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 5.

The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County.

At Pymatuning on July 14 learn the history of Pymatuning Lake, and how the Game Commission has managed this unusual area for more than 65 years for wildlife and for the enjoyment and education of Pennsylvania's citizens.

On July 21, author, radio personality and wildlife pest expert "Trapper" John Columbo will present his entertaining program, *Pesky Critters and how to Survive Them*, which covers pests, from bees to beavers and his unusual remedies to deal with them.

Programs are free at Pymatuning. They start at 2 p.m. and are held at the Wildlife Learning Center located near Linesville, Crawford County.



Antlerless license application schedule

COUNTY TREASURERS will begin accepting antlerless deer license applications through the mail from Pennsylvania residents beginning Monday, August 6. Nonresidents may apply through the mail starting Monday, August 20.

For the first round of applications for "unsold antlerless deer licenses," county treasurers will be accepting applications from residents and nonresidents by mail on Monday, August 27.

For the second round of applications for "unsold antlerless deer licenses," applications will be accepted beginning Monday, September 10. Watch local news media or check the Game Commission's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) for county availability of licenses.

Over-the-counter-sales will begin in Special Regulations Area counties on Monday, August 27; in all other counties, where they're still available, on Monday, November 5.

Another View

By Linda Steiner

Oh, sure, there was all the fanfare that goes with taking a trophy buck, but it was the behind-the-scenes experiences of the hunters that I found fascinating.

The "Other" Story at the Big Game Scoring Sessions

WHILE ATTENDING one of the Game Commission's big game scoring sessions earlier this year, I strolled around the mount-filled room, open-mouthed at the huge racks. There was everything from wide-spreading, wrist-thick antlers to slim, classic "candelabras," to points-jutting-every-which-way non-typical conformations. I viewed the antlers, certainly, but I also watched the people, and I listened to them.

Every hunter's buck is a unique happening, a tale worth telling. The several hundred Pennsylvania sportsmen and women who were at the measuring session knew they had come to get their trophy deer heads measured. What they may not have realized, however, until they arrived, was that this gathering also gave them an opportunity to tell each other (and visitors like me) the stories of their successful hunts.

For many, the deer rack being scored that day was the biggest one they'd shot or ever expected to shoot. Others told me these trophy racks were just the best ones they'd gotten the last several years. "We were here with the other ones at earlier scoring sessions," they told me.

Ten big buck heads rested on one table. "Who got these?" I asked, expecting 10

hunters to speak up. Instead, four answered, all buddies and relatives from the region's largest city. "We have a lot more on the walls at home," they said. The deer were a mix of bow and firearm kills. What's their secret? They concentrate on the deer that live close to town, because they have plenty of time to scout them. One told me he spends 80 percent of his time scouting and 20 percent hunting. "I scout year-round," he confided. These trophy-getters said they don't shoot small bucks and that they take only the "keepers." "Big bucks need age; let the little ones pass," said the oldest member of the group. That group has been scoring on "city bucks" since the 1980s, when deer populations improved near their homes.

I also talked to a gentleman from a Big Woods county in the north, which is not known nowadays for trophy-size antlers. The deer head he was carrying was a dandy 11-point. It was also dark-colored, evidence of decades on the wall. "I didn't get this buck," he said, "my father shot it, back in 1952." His dad tracked the deer for three days, in what was then farm country, before he killed it.

Persistence paid off for many of the successful hunters I talked to at the measuring session. Amber told me she got her tro-

phy buck a couple of years ago, when she was 12.

Opening day afternoon found her and her dad in "grandpa's condo," his comfortable, roofed deer stand at the farm. About 3 o'clock, Amber's dad asked if she could stand it a couple more hours, or if she wanted to go home. She said, "I'm good, Dad," and went back to watching the chilly woods. Shortly after, a big 8-point appeared, and Amber made a 100-yard standing shot. What do friends her age think about her deer hunting trophy? "They think it's cool," she told me.

Jacob also shot his big buck his first year of hunting, when he was 12. He got the 9-point on the second day of last year's buck season.

"I was stationed under a pine tree and three or four guys were making a drive to Dad and me," he said. "We heard the yelling and they were getting closer. I was sitting down and the gun was on my knees. Dad was behind me when the deer stopped. He had his hands on my shoulder, squeezing my neck hard, telling me to shoot. I said, 'Dad, if you let go, I'll shoot it.' I shot and the deer went right down. I was very excited." The young man also killed a doe last year, and he's a veteran shooter and woodsman. "I do a lot of practice shooting, and I was prepared for my first hunting season," Jacob told me. "I've been going out into the woods with Dad since I was seven or eight."

Thirteen-year-old Julie was at the big game scoring event, although not with a trophy buck of her own. She was with her dad and his 11-point. It was shot midweek in buck season, when hardly anyone was in the woods. The deer came through in early afternoon, "chasing does, still in rut," he said. When he got it out of the woods, he called his daughter. Julie picked up the tale: "I told Dad, let me guess, you got a 10-point. He said, no, a 12-point. It's the biggest buck he ever got." She beamed with as much pride as he did. Julie didn't get a buck last year, but she did get a doe and is



Linda Steiner

PGC Northwest Region Director KEITH HARBAUGH with his son, SHAWN, who had his 8-point measured at a scoring session.

a champion small-bore rifle shot. She showed me her shooting medals. "I wouldn't give up shooting for the world," Julie said.

I talked to 9-year-old Zack, who was watching his dad's 8-point being scored. Zack told me he plans to hunt with his father when he's old enough, and Dad said he's looking forward to it. How did Zack's dad get his trophy? "I was hunting does in a Green Tag area during buck season and this was the only deer we got up in the drives all day. I was lucky to get a shot." Nearby, another luck-buck was being measured. That hunter told me he was walking toward his stand after lunch and "this buck just stood up in a brushpile."

Happenstance enters into all successful hunts, but some bucks at the session were as planned as a deer-kill can get. I chatted with a strapping young man who was balancing the chest of his deer mount on the floor in front of him. The tall, thick tines of the massive rack reached well up in front of him. This huge deer was an archery kill and a center of crowd attention. Mike told me he bowhunts "a lot," in several states besides Pennsylvania. He had hunted the 10-point for three years and finally shot him last November. "I knew he was in there, so I didn't hunt the area until the rut. I didn't want to put him off," said Mike.

LINDA'S July 2000 column, "Voices," won Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association's Best Magazine Column Award, 2000 (sponsored by Coleman Co.). This is the fourth time a *Game News* "Another View" column has won POWA's Best Magazine Column Award. Also, her August 2000 column, "Happy Trails," won a First Place in the Outdoor Writers Association of America's Outdoor Travel awards category. This is Linda's first 1st place at OWAA, to go along with several 2nds and 3rds she's earned over the years.

He controlled the circumstances of the shot by making a mock scrape and rattling and grunting the buck in. "I like to pick a trophy deer and hunt him," Mike told me.

While some hunters said they had no idea that a large buck was frequenting their hunting area, others said they knew the bruiser was around. Jack said he had seen the 12-point's shed antlers from the year before and knew he was still alive. So he climbed into his archery treestand opening day of small game season last year, hoping that rabbit and pheasant hunters would push the deer his way. That's what happened, and that's what brought him to the scoring session.

Russ told me he and his hunting buddies, who were putting on drives two years ago, knew an 18-point trophy "had to be in that patch of red-brush. We hadn't put him up anywhere else and no one else had shot him." They drove out the last thicket of the day and Russ made a successful shot.

Jody's story was that he had seen his big buck contest winner the end of archery season last year, but didn't get a shot. He went back to the place the first morning of buck season, looking for the deer. He saw

the 22-point non-typical following a group of does and this time got a crack at it. "I couldn't believe the size of the rack. My son and grandson came up to me about 10 o'clock and helped me get it out. To have them both there with me, that day, well, that brought a tear to my eye," said Jody, blinking even then.

Deer hunting means that much in many families. I talked to a father and son, both named John. They were at the scoring session with the younger man's 8-point and another 8-point, shot by the grandfather, John Sr. John Sr. had passed away recently, and the two said they thought it would be nice to have Grandpa's deer measured, too. Amazingly, the antlers on the older buck, shot in 1962, were a near match in shape and size to the grandson's, taken in 2000, scarcely a mile from where Granddad got his trophy.

Another father and son team accompanied one of the last racks I saw scored. Shawn watched closely as the tape was put to his wide-spreading 8-point. His dad, Keith, walked over from a neighboring measuring table to observe — Keith Harbaugh is the Northwest Region Director for the Game Commission. Shawn told me he shot the big buck, his first deer, the first day of the 1997 gun season, when he was 12 years old. "I was sitting under a tree with Dad and it was following a doe," said Shawn. "It walked out from behind a tree and I shot it at 50 yards. Every year since then I've gotten a buck or a doe," he said.

Certainly son Shawn's deer was special to Director Harbaugh, but weren't he and the other Game Commission officers tired of seeing buck racks by then? "Not at all," said Keith. "Every deer is special to the hunter." I knew he didn't mean special for the size of its antlers, but special for the unique circumstances of the hunt. □

Best known for her sojourn in the wilds of British Columbia, which resulted in her best-selling book *Driftwood Valley*, this ecologist, despite her world-wide travels, had her roots in Pennsylvania.

Theodora Cope Gray — Nature's Own Child

SHE DIED as she had wished, propped up in her bed so she could watch the birds at her feeder. At 94 years old, Teddy Gray had lived a long and fascinating life. She would say that her happiest days were those spent when she was married to Philip Gray, whom she wed when she was 60.

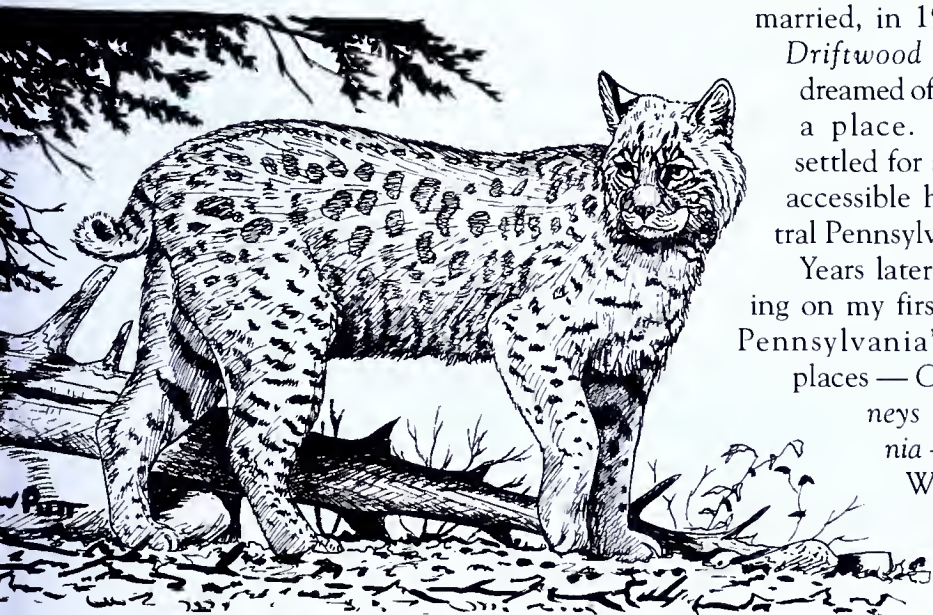
But fans all over the world remember her for her marriage to Englishman John Stanwell-Fletcher, a trapper and Arctic explorer, and their sojourn in the wilds of British Columbia, which resulted in Teddy's

best-selling book *Driftwood Valley*. It was the ultimate wilderness adventure, what many people dream about doing but few venture to try.

Based on a diary Teddy kept, *Driftwood Valley* was published in 1946 and received the John Burroughs Medal for outstanding literary work in the field of natural history. Over the years, the book has gone through many printings, including the latest in 1999. New generations continue to read it and be inspired by it.

Soon after husband Bruce and I were married, in 1962, we read *Driftwood Valley* and dreamed of living in such a place. Instead, we settled for a remote, but accessible home in central Pennsylvania.

Years later, while working on my first book about Pennsylvania's natural places — *Outbound Journeys in Pennsylvania* — we visited Woodbourne Forest and Wildlife Sanctuary



in Susquehanna County. Owned and operated by The Nature Conservancy, it has one of the best old growth forests in eastern Pennsylvania. The land had been donated to the conservancy by the Francis R. Cope family in three separate pieces — 478 acres in 1956, 72 acres in 1965, and 52 acres in 1978.

"You know," then caretaker and naturalist Joyce Stone told me, "Teddy Gray, Cope's daughter, is still alive and lives in the family home. She wrote *Driftwood Valley*."

I was flabbergasted.

"But she doesn't give interviews," Joyce added. So I respected her privacy and didn't mention her when I wrote my chapter on Woodbourne.

Then, more than a decade later, in 1993, I was contacted by writer John Elder. He was editing a two-volume reference set called *American Nature Writers*. Because I am a Pennsylvania nature writer who has also written two books about pioneering American women naturalists, he thought I would be able to write an 8,000-word essay about Teddy Gray's life and books for his reference work.

"But she doesn't give interviews," I told him.

"See what you can do," he replied.

Not only did she not give interviews, there had, despite her fame, never been one biographical article about her.

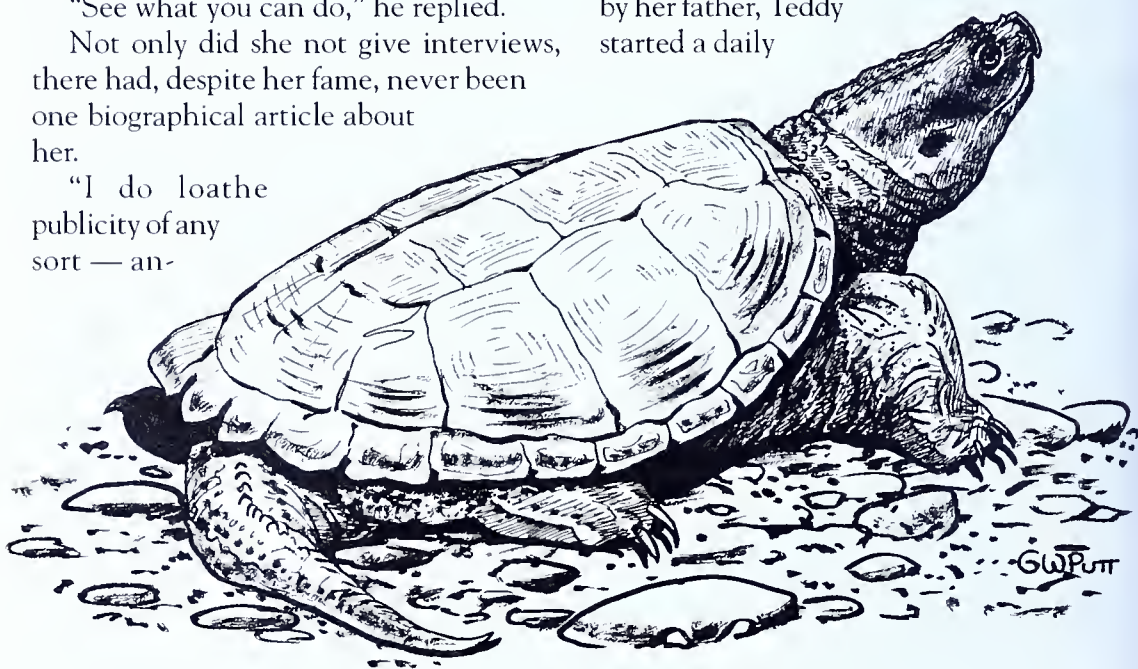
"I do loathe publicity of any sort — an-

nounced publishers, now so long ago, by refusing to attend social affairs or appear in public," she wrote to me in answer to my letter asking if I could interview her. Nevertheless, she agreed to an interview.

Near the end of the incredible winter of 1993-94, Bruce and I traveled to the small home she lived in on her family property near Woodbourne. Even though it was March 19, three-foot snowbanks lined the icy rural roads. Teddy didn't mind, though. At 88 she still snowshoed every day, a skill she had learned when she was six years old and attending the local, four-room Dimock school. In winter she either snowshoed to school or traveled on a bobsled pulled by a team of horses.

Soon after her birth in Germantown, Pennsylvania, on January 4, 1906, her father, Francis R. Cope, decided to move to the family home built by his father, Alexis T. Cope, in 1883 near Dimock. There he started an orchard business.

Cope, like several of his relatives, including a third cousin — the famous 19th century paleontologist Edward Drinker Cope — was a naturalist and teacher. His special passion was birds, and he became an expert amateur ornithologist. At age 8, instructed by her father, Teddy started a daily



bird list, a habit she kept up all her life.

Both Cope and his wife, Evelyn F. Morris Cope, loved the outdoors and communicated that love not only to their child, but to her cousins and the local farmers' children. As part of their commitment to educate children about nature, the Copes conducted their informal Dimock Nature Study Camp every summer.

They either camped in the 200-acre old growth forest tract at Woodbourne or at East Fishing Creek on land owned by Cope's friend, Colonel Bruce Ricketts. That land later became part of Ricketts Glen State Park. At the camp they taught not only camping skills and natural history, but also lessons in personal ideals and behavior, based on the Cope family's long tradition of Quaker idealism and public service.

As a teenager, Teddy lived part of the time with her Quaker grandmother and aunts in Germantown, so she could attend Germantown Friends' School.

"Has thee made a little quiet time for thyself today?" they continually asked her. She took this query seriously and throughout her life, quiet, sparsely inhabited places maintained a hold on her. She also loved to read and grew up surrounded by books and adults who read aloud every evening.

In 1924 she entered Mount Holyoke College. Its isolated, beautiful setting in South Hadley, Massachusetts, suited her perfectly. Because of her interest in the interrelationship of nature and humanity, she majored in economic geography. After her graduation from college, her father took her in search of rare birds for a year, visiting such remote places as Fiji, Java and Sumatra, as well as Australia and New Zealand.

Then, encouraged by her parents, she entered Cornell University in 1930 to study for a Master of Science Degree. A founding member of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, she worked under ornithologist Arthur A. Allen and Albert H. Wright. Wright allowed her to pursue field work — "personal observation of the spe-

cies in their natural haunts" as she researched and wrote her master's thesis entitled "Some Observations of the Vertebrate Ecology of a Pennsylvania Mountain Farm." Although she conducted her field work for the thesis during the summer of 1931 and the spring of 1932, she based much of her study on earlier notes and observations she had made under her father's tutelage. She described how she watched a pileated

woodpecker nest, a red fox

den, a mink that had taken up residence in an old woodchuck den, and the behavior of muskrats.

As part of her research, she also conducted bird censuses in Woodbourne's old-growth forest, and on a chilly day in May recorded 23 species. She performed similar censuses on other sections of the varied property and concluded that the large numbers of birds were due to "the relatively large amount of forest land that has been allowed to remain on this farm, thus helping to furnish the birds with plenty of shelter and food." She added that her family was trying to save as much native forest land as possible and to reforest cleared areas that were not productive for farming. Her twin themes of conservation of old growth forest and reforestation of marginal farmland — relatively new ideas in the 1930s — are still being debated.

Continuing her interest in old growth

Teddy Cope's twin themes of conservation of old growth forest and reforestation of marginal farmland were new ideas in the 1930s, and they're still being debated today.

forests, Teddy went on to obtain her Ph.D. in vertebrate ecology from Cornell, entitling her dissertation "Observations on the Vertebrate Ecology of Some Pennsylvania Virgin Forests." In addition to studying Woodbourne's 200 acres of old growth, she chose three other old growth forests — a 600-acre tract at Silver Lake, also in Susquehanna County, the 800-acre old growth tract on Ricketts's property, and the 4,300-acre Tionesta Tract in the Allegheny National Forest.

Her father, as vice president of the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, had been influential in saving the Tionesta Tract, and together they conducted a survey of its flora and fauna. In writing her dissertation, she wanted to leave a record for future naturalists or what these forests contained "before [they] had been ruthlessly changed by the hand of man."

She showed empathy for even despised wildlife such as rattlesnakes (which are "not harmful unless molested"), snapping turtles ("most adaptable. They learned to take food off a fork"), and little brown bats, which she hand fed. She also recorded the mating of spotted salamanders, collected a rare bog lemming at Woodbourne, and faithfully listed and described the woody and herbaceous plants, fishes, reptiles, amphibians, breeding birds and mammals living in each old growth forest.

She concluded that varied habitats contain an abundance of species, "that much may be learned from Nature's methods of growing trees and all forms of plant and animal life, and that these methods may well be superior to those employed by man," and that predators, such as bobcats, "may well be more beneficial than harm-

ful in helping to maintain a balance of healthy wild animal life in any given year."

After receiving her Ph.D. in 1936, Teddy had her chance to live in the wilderness. During one of two summers she spent in Churchill, Manitoba, studying birds and plants as part of a team of Cornell scientists and students, she met John Stanwell-Fletcher, whom she married in

1937. Together they headed for a remote valley in British Columbia, 200 miles north-east of the southern tip of Alaska. The nearest telephone, railroad and road were 240 miles away. No humans had ever lived in the valley they chose. It was "virgin territory . . . untouched wilderness" where they could build a home, live a peaceful, simple life, and study the flora and

fauna in natural conditions throughout all the seasons.

They collected plant and animal specimens for the British Columbia Provincial Museum, often under the most trying conditions — "mosquitoes attack one's neck, or ear, or arm just as one reaches the crucial and most difficult part of the job," she wrote. They found mountain maple far north of its known range, extended the range of northern skunks, pygmy owls and evening grosbeaks, and set a new record for the northern range of cougars. Altogether they produced an annotated list that included 280 plants, 13 fishes, 4 amphibians, 139 birds and 41 mammal species and subspecies.

Best of all, though, were the wolves. Their valley became "a concert hall filled with wolf music."

"The Natives," she told me during my visit, "were never afraid of wolves. They knew of no one who had been attacked by

*"Man talks much,"
Teddy Gray wrote,
"about serving his
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earth, which has
served him faithfully
throughout the centu-
ries of his being . . ."*

them. I think hearing them sing in the mating season opened our eyes to their real character.”

Both Teddy and her husband championed the wolves as intelligent predators deserving respect from humans.

In 1942, two years before Adolph Murie's *The Wolves of Mount McKinley* was published, Stanwell-Fletcher wrote a sympathetic study of the wolves they had observed for *Natural History* magazine.

By then the idyll was over. Teddy had returned to Woodbourne to raise her infant daughter. Her husband had gone off to war.

Despite being a fulltime mother, Teddy managed to write *Driftwood Valley* and two other books in the next two decades. The *Tundra World* was a fictionalized account of her summers in Churchill and *Clear Lands and Icy Seas* was based on two summer trips she made to the eastern Arctic in 1952 and 1953 on a Hudson's Bay Company supply ship. In both books, nature takes the front seat.

She traveled to and sometimes lived in many places during her life — Alaska, California, the American Southwest, Scandinavia, Kenya, Tanzania, Tahiti, Great Britain, the Gaspé Peninsula — but she always came back to Woodbourne. After the death of her husband, Philip Gray, in 1978, she led a quiet and retired life, but she still attended the regular meet-

ings of the Woodbourne Management Committee. When they argued about whether or not deer hunting and beaver trapping should be allowed on the sanctuary, Teddy said that “In order to preserve the forest, some hunting of deer should be allowed and some trapping of beaver.”

She was a small, lively woman with clear, blue eyes who enjoyed picnicking in the woods every day, even in the winter. Her favorite birds were hermit thrushes and winter wrens. She disliked technology and refused to use a typewriter.

“I'm an ecologist,” she once told her husband Philip. “To my nature-mill, everything's grist.”

At her memorial service last July, I was struck by how many local people stood up to say how she had turned them on to the beauties of the natural world. Even the nurses who had cared for her in her last days learned about the birds she was still watching from her windows.

“Man talks much,” she wrote in *Driftwood Valley*, “about serving his fellow men, very little about serving the earth which has served him faithfully throughout the centuries of his being, and without whose cooperation he could not even exist.”

Throughout her life, Teddy Gray faithfully served the earth and its wild creatures. She and her family have also left us the wonderful gift of Woodbourne Forest and Wildlife Sanctuary. □

Books in Brief

Thornapples, by Charles Fergus, 259 pp.; order from the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797, \$16.95 plus \$2.95 shipping & handling, or order from the comfort and convenience of your home online at the PGC's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us. Go to the Outdoor Shop and make your selection. For years, Charles Fergus chronicled his outdoor activities in the *Pennsylvania Game News'* popular “Thornapples” column. Some of the best of his writings are now collected in this new edition illustrated volume. The book takes readers on a year of adventures and rambles in the natural world, all described in vivid detail and filled with the timeless spirit of the great outdoors.

Just like with most other archery equipment, bow sights have come a long way. Some adjustments and maintenance will . . .

Make Your Hunting Sight Work for You

WITH BOW SEASON rapidly approaching, now is the time to put those finishing touches on your hunting equipment. An important part of those final preparations is the fine-tuning of your hunting bow sight.

When I started bowhunting in the late '50s, bow sights were as rare as the proverbial hen's teeth. It wasn't long, however, before bowhunters learned just how valuable a sighting device can be.

Since those early days, bow sights have progressed from a simple pin and slide to some models so complicated they come with instruction manuals. Regardless of how simple or complicated a sight you choose, a complete understanding of the basics of adjusting and maintaining your bow sight is an important step to ensuring success in the field.

A bow sight is simply a reference point; it can't think. To work, it must be properly adjusted, and the first step in the sighting procedure is to ensure the bow is properly tuned. This means having the right bow/arrow combination, and ensuring the bow produces the most efficient performance and the best possible arrow flight. The best arrow flight will produce the tightest groups, and all else being equal, tight groups

are going to be the basis for determining the proper sight settings.

Before beginning the sighting-in process, it's important to establish one basic guideline. Determine the vital kill area of the big game animal that you intend to hunt. In the case of the white-tailed deer, the vital area on the chest cavity of a mature adult is approximately seven inches in diameter. This means an arrow aimed at the middle of a deer's chest cavity would strike the vital heart lung area if it hit 3½ inches high or low. Obviously a high hit would produce a lung only hit, while a low hit might produce a combination of heart and lung. A hit dead center, depending upon angle, will produce a lung hit and possibly sever major arteries in the chest cavity.

The vital area for a mature adult mule deer or bear is about nine inches, and the vital area for a mature adult elk is approximately 13 inches. These dimensions are not exact, nor are the vital areas true circles but are, instead, slightly egg shaped. This, however, gives us a good place to start.

When sighting in your bow you should never set a sight pin for any farther than the longest distance at which you can keep all of your arrows well within the vital area

of the animal that you intend to hunt. One of the criteria for a hunting shot is not a question of whether or not you have a good chance to make the shot, but rather a question of whether or not you can make the hit every time. Shot discipline is important and must be the goal of every ethical hunter. Knowing the size of your target and keeping your shots within that area determines how far you can take a responsible hunting shot. Under actual hunting conditions, other variables, such as an unobstructed shooting path and a safe backstop, also must be taken into consideration.

Select the distance at which you intend to set your first sight pin. Carefully shoot a group of at least six arrows. Note the position of the group and determine its center. Assuming the group is not centered, the bow sight can be adjusted to move the group to the desired position. If the group is high move the bow sight up. If the group is low move the sight down. The elevation adjustment is the same for right or left-handed shooters. If the group is to the right, a right-handed shooter should move his sight to the right, or into the bow. For a right group the left-handed shooter should

also move his sight to the right, which in his case is away from the bow. For a left group the right-handed shooter should adjust his sight to the left or away from the bow while a left-handed shooter moves his sight to the left or into the bow.

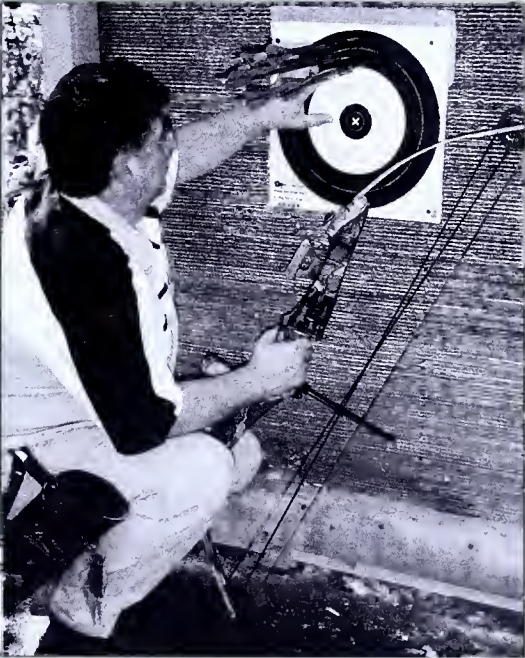
Although it is common to adjust both windage and elevation at the same time, it is sometimes advisable to do one at a time. It may take a few minutes longer, but it's sometimes simpler working with one adjustment. Once a sight adjustment has been made, fire at least six shots before determining if an additional adjustment is required. Bowhunters often fire one shot, adjust the sight, fire another shot and make another adjustment. This method does not give you the advantage of determining the center of a number of shots but, instead, has you chasing the last shot, which may or may not have been a good shot.

Remember: Shoot for a group. Once you

Sandy Kasun



Sandy Kasun



THE GROUP in the photo on the left is not tight enough to make any sight adjustments. The archer must continue shooting until groups improve. Above, the six arrows are grouped nicely. Raising the sight slightly will move the group down and on center.

are grouping, it's a simple matter to adjust the group to the center of the target. When the first sight pin has been set, simply move to the next desired distance and repeat the process.

If you obtain your initial set of sight settings using field points, remember that the final sight settings must be obtained using the broadheads you intend to hunt with. Although the majority of mechanical broadheads will group the same as a field tip of the same weight, that is not always the case. When shooting a fixed bladed hunting head, do not assume that the head and a field tip of the same weight will group in the same spot. I don't care what the advertisement says; don't believe it.

It's important to also shoot them at each distance at which you are sighted in. Field tips and broadheads that hit in the same spot at 15 yards may hit a foot apart at 30. Don't fight it. As a bowhunter it's your responsibility to be sure; shoot those broadheads and check those sight settings.

Holding the bow with a slight cant can produce a change in windage as you move farther from the target. On a multiple pin sight this may not be obvious when setting the sight, as each pin's windage is set individually. However, when the setting of all the pins is complete, check their vertical alignment. If each of the pins is set at a different windage, it's an indication of a canted bow or the use of an arrow with improper spine, or an improper horizontal adjustment of the arrow rest. Any of these conditions are much more obvious when using a multiple pin sight than a sight with only one sight pin that is movable vertically to compensate for distance.

If you are using a one-pin movable sight system and you notice your bow tends to shoot to the right or left as you move farther from the target, it is a good indication of a problem as previously mentioned. The easiest way to check for bow cant is to have someone stand behind you when you shoot and check the upper limb of your bow to make sure you are holding it vertically. In

the event your bow is being held vertically and your arrows are still shooting right or left as you move away from the target, your arrows are improperly spined or your arrow rest is not adjusted properly.

When using a string peep for hunting it is advisable to use a peep with the largest hole possible. While a small hole in a rear peep is accurate, it works best under conditions with a lot of light. Most hunting opportunities, unfortunately, come under less than ideal conditions. Overcast skies, thickets and heavy foliage are common during the hunting season. These conditions rob the available light and may make seeing through a peep with a small hole difficult or at times impossible.

One caution, however, when shooting with a peep with a large hole, make sure your front sight pin is centered in the peep every time. Simply having the sight pin inside the peep is not good enough. If the front sight pin is high, low, right or left in the peep, it will make a tremendous change in the impact point of the arrow. The large peep, being close to the eye, tends to magnify any error in alignment of the front sight. Center the pin for the best accuracy.

A hunting sight set up is no good unless it can hold up to the rigors of actual hunting conditions. A hunting bow spends most of the season being transported. In the truck, out of the truck, up the tree and through the brush. No matter how careful you are, your equipment is subject to a lot of bumps and bangs. When selecting a hunting sight, pay attention to both the construction and the method by which the windage and elevation are adjusted and locked. The sight pins should be either sturdy enough to not bend or flexible enough to bend and spring back to their original position. A number of sights on the market have built-in pin guards designed to protect the pins from damage.

Although sight pins with fine beads are very popular among bowhunters, they are not always the best choice for hunting conditions. As with the string peep, fine pins

are great in bright light but can be difficult to pick up as the light dims. Because most bow shots are taken at relative close ranges, choose a sight pin with a large bead. It will be easier to see quickly under a variety of conditions and is more than accurate enough at 25 yards or less.

Light gathering fiber optic sights have become popular over the past several years. They help focus the light and direct its brightness to the end of the pin. They come in a variety of fluorescent colors, making them easy to identify according to yardage settings. They are a great addition to a hunting sight.

When selecting a sight, the methods used to make the actual windage and elevation sight adjustments are important considerations. A top quality sight will allow you to make the windage and elevation adjustments independently. Nothing is more frustrating then trying to make a minor adjustment in windage only to accidentally change your elevation at the same time.

Another feature of a good sight is an adjustment system with a positive lock. Vibration is a sight's worst enemy. Over the course of a hunting season it is a rare sight that doesn't get shaken loose. I have talked to many hunters who have had their sight

pins vibrate loose, allowing the pin to slowly slide down the sight bar unnoticed until the opportunity for a shot arises. Imagine the surprise when an arrow shot using what once was a 20-yard pin sails six feet over the back of that big buck as the sight pin has now settled towards the bottom of the sight bar.

After adjusting your sight pins and making sure the locking adjustments are securely locked, it's a good idea to mark the location of each pin on the sight bar with a marker or tape. A quick glance will then serve as a check to ensure your settings have not changed.

Every bow sight has a number of screws, locking nuts, brackets and other parts that can go bump in the night, and a hunting sight can be a source of excessive noise if not properly maintained. In addition to keeping all the locking adjustments tight, it's a good idea to use a drop of removable Loc-Tite on each of the screws when assembling and mounting any all metal sights. This will help keep the sight from vibrating loose and reduce the noise generated by a loose mounting screw.

A hunting sight that is properly maintained and adjusted can be one of the bowhunter's best friends. Make it work for you so it won't work against you. □

COVER PAINTING BY NED SMITH

LEGENDARY ARTIST Ned Smith said that this month's cover was the best wild turkey painting he had ever done. This fine art print — the sixth time-limited print — by the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art measures 15x22½ inches and will be on acid-free paper, with an embossed seal of the Ned Smith Center. A limited edition 4-inch embroidered patch complements the print; patches are \$5 with \$1.50 shipping for up to five. Prints are \$150 each (\$125 for members), plus \$12 shipping; framed prints are \$245 (\$220 for members), plus \$17 shipping. PA residents add 6% sales tax. Make checks payable to and order from: Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, P.O. Box 33, Millersburg, PA 17061. All proceeds will benefit the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art.

As many long-time readers know, Ned had a long association with *Game News*, as staff artist, acting editor, and then contributing artist. His "Gone for the Day" column, which appeared in *Game News*, was published in book form in 1971 and has become an acknowledged classic of Pennsylvania nature writing. Ned also created Pennsylvania's first and third state duck stamps and the first three paintings for our popular Working Together for Wildlife program.

Want to stir up a controversy at the old hunting camp? Tell your buddies that your particular cartridge is the best thing going for deer hunting.

Whitetail Cartridges

“WHEN MY .35 Remington cracks, there’s meat for the table,” an old hunter said. “In more than 40 years of hunting, I can recall only two shots that didn’t stop the deer instantly or within 15 yards or so. The .35 Remington with a 200-grain bullet can’t be beat in the deer woods, and that’s what I want written on my tombstone.”

“Harvey, you might know more about raising hogs than anyone in the county, but your knowledge about ballistics is limited,” replied a bystander. “While the .35 and the 200-grain bullet is right at home in heavy brush, it’s far from adequate for long shots.”

Harvey lost no time in defending his argument, but he left rather quickly after being reminded of an incident when he missed two shots across Martin’s hollow. A neighbor with a 7mm Remington Magnum made the 275-yard shot on the dandy 9-point. The 1,900 fps muzzle velocity of the 200-grain bullet was no match for the 3,000 plus fps generated by the 7mm Rem. Mag.

Every Pennsylvania deer hunter has probably heard a similar argument. It seems that deer hunters are pretty touchy about their choices of cartridges, types of actions



Chiprean Photo

JIMMY CHIPREAN, center, from Butler County dropped this 6-point in Jefferson County with a Model 700 Remington chambered for the .270 Winchester, which is as versatile a whitetail cartridge as you’ll find. JIMMY is flanked by hunting partners FRED VERO, left, and BRAD CHIPREAN, right.

and brands of rifles. I still remember hearing a hunter say that it wouldn’t be deer hunting without a lever action. Another hunter is completely sold on a pump action while still another is just as adamant about a bolt. The same holds true for cartridges, and trying to resolve an argument about a bullet type or weight is really going out on thin ice. These arguments have been going on forever, and there’s no indication they will cease. I feel this is a good time to enter my two cents worth.

The super magnums are making a come-

back. Recently, a hunter asked what I thought about using the new Remington .300 Ultra Magnum for deer. I jokingly told him to aim for the neck to make certain of a sure kill. The .300 Magnum for deer? That's like using a 10-gauge 3½-inch shotshell for woodcock. I relented somewhat, however, when he told me he was interested in having a cartridge that would be adequate for all types of North American big game. I lost no time in admitting the Remington .300 Ultra Mag would do the job, but I reminded him that he would probably spend far more time hunting deer and black bears than moose or grizzlies.

From a ballistic viewpoint, literally any centerfire cartridge (I think it's wise to rule out .224 varmint cartridges) can be used for white-tailed deer. Admittedly, though, some thought has to be given to the bullet when using any of the 6mm cartridges. Basically, bullet weights ranging from 60 to 85 grains are designed for small animals and break apart shortly after impact. Deer hunters using 6mm cartridges are better off using 90- to 105-grain bullets. They have tougher jackets and give better penetration.

In 1895 the .30-30 or 30 WCF appeared on the scene in Winchester's Model 1894 lever action rifle. It was the first American small bore smokeless powder sporting cartridge. Even though many more powerful cartridges competed with the .30-30, it is still the round other deer cartridges are compared to. Probably one of the .30-30s attractive features is its availability in short, compact rifles. It's pretty hard to beat a Model 94 Winchester in dense brush or on steep terrain. Although more than 100 years old, the Model 94 still enjoys a large following, and there are no signs that the old .30-30 will be retired anytime soon.

When the military adopted the .30-06 in 1906 for the 1903 Springfield, no one thought it would one day become one of America's favorite big game cartridges. The rimless .30-03 (later the .30-06) replaced the rimmed .30-40 Krag as the official U.S.

military cartridge, and it would hold that position until it was superseded by the 7.62 mm, which is known in the hunting ranks as the .308 Winchester.

My mention of the .30-03 may surprise many .30-06 owners, but it was around several years before becoming the .30-06. In fact, Winchester's 1895 lever action rifle seems to be the first sporting rifle chambered for the .30-03. It was added to the Winchester line of cartridges in 1904, and it wasn't until 1908 that Winchester added the modified .30-06.

There's no question that the old '06 has played a prominent role in big game hunting in Pennsylvania and, for that matter, across the United States. Big game hunters should be quite selective on which bullet weights to use. From the testing I've done, bullet weights below 150 grains in the .30-06 are not suitable for big game. The 100-grain and even 130-grain bullets are basically designed for animals smaller than deer and black bear. I also found that the .30-06 doesn't offer top long-range accuracy with bullet weights in the 100- to 130-grain range. In this particular category, the .270 Winchester has a definite edge. In reality, the .30-06 is suitable (with the proper bullet weight) for literally all types of North American big game. If I encountered a grizzly bear, however, I would feel better with something in the .300 Winchester Magnum line.

Generally speaking, the .30-06 turns in a super job on deer and black bear with the heavier bullets. I might be going out on the proverbial limb by saying the 165-grain bullet is the wisest choice for general big game hunting. Elk hunters should opt for 180-grain bullets, and moose call for 200- or even 220-grain slugs.

The .270 Winchester made its debut in 1926. It's based on a necked down .30-06 case. Right from the start, it was (and still is) a controversial cartridge. Its critics (basically .30-06 users) claim the .270 can't compare with their favorite. To some extent, this is true. However, the .270 is a

flatter shooting cartridge. For comparison, a 130-grain 30-caliber spitzer bullet has a ballistic coefficient of .295. The same 130-grain bullet in the 277-caliber boasts a BC of .460. The .270 also has a slight BC edge with 150-grain bullets. Revealing this information certainly won't end the controversy, but no big game hunter should feel underpowered when using either cartridge with bullets of adequate weights.

The 30-caliber cartridge comes in a variety of names and sizes. A few popular names that have withstood the years along with the .30-06 are the .300 Savage, .30-30 Winchester, .308 Winchester, .300 H&H Magnum, 7.62 Russian and the .30-40 Krag. These date back many years, but several new cartridges, such as the .300 Dakota, .300 Weatherby, .300 Remington Ultra Magnum and the .300 Winchester Short Action Magnum have come on the scene. I'm well aware that both lists could have more entries, but I'm simply bringing to mind a few 30-caliber cartridges that are available.

To some extent the 30-caliber dominated Pennsylvania's deer hunting clan, with the .30-30 Winchester and .30-06 being the most popular. In the Great Depression era, the ex-military uncut .30-40 Krag was a common sight in the deer woods.

Helen Lewis



My late brother-in-law, C. J. Clawson from Indiana, PA, bought Krag's in large quantities still packed in wooden boxes ready for shipment overseas. I've forgotten the details, but it seems he paid between two and four dollars for each rifle. C. J. said on weekends (especially payday weekends in the mining towns) he packed his car full of Krag's and traveled over the countryside selling them for \$8 to \$10.

Strange as it may be, the .32 Winchester Special doesn't get much space in gun articles. While it's still hanging on to some degree, it has nothing more to offer in the way of power and speed than the .30-30. Because it's a rimmed cartridge, it had to be used in lever and single-shot actions. Remington came out with a rimless version to be used in their bolt action and semi-automatic rifles. It came out in a smokeless powder version, but with its 1 in 16-inch twist, the .32 Special could be successfully loaded with black powder. The slower twist of the .32, compared to the 1 in 12-inch twist of the .30-30, would not foul the barrel as quickly. However, once the barrel became worn in the .32 Special, accuracy went out the window.

The 7mm (.284) has been around for years, but it has been only fairly recently that big game hunters have realized the full potential of the .284 diameter bullet. The old 7mm Mauser has been around since 1892. The Spanish government adopted it as a military cartridge, but thousands of deer and black bear hunters used it successfully.

The .284 Winchester should have been a winner. No matter how you look at it, the .284 is a superb big game cartridge, and I'm including game the size of elk and moose. It has a standard rim diameter, but the case body is nearly up to some of the belted magnums. This set-up is referred to

HERE are three veteran cartridges that have seen action in the Keystone State deer woods. From left to right: .30-40 Krag, .35 Remington and 6.5x55 Swedish Mauser.

as a “rebated” case. Unfortunately, Winchester brought it out in their Model 88 lever action rifle, and Savage eventually chambered its Model 99 lever for the .284. For some reason it just didn’t catch on with the big game crowd.

The .280 Remington is another story. Without going into detail, it’s really a .30-06 class cartridge, and I believe more efficient than the .270 Winchester.

The 7mm-08 appeals to me as a deer cartridge. In fact, I think it’s the epitome of a deer/black bear cartridge. The 140-grain factory load generates a muzzle

velocity close to 2,800 fps, which makes the 7mm-08 a superb 200-yard plus deer cartridge.

Remington’s 7mm Magnum, along with the 7mm Weatherby Magnum are top choices for big game long-range shooting. It’s fair to say the 7mm Weatherby has a slight advantage, but both cartridges will satisfy the most demanding North American big game hunter.

When it comes right down to it, though, any big game cartridge is a good deer rifle in the hands of a good hunter and competent shot. □

***Fun Games* — By Connie Mertz**

Watching the Waders

Match the shorebird with its correct description, and then copy the letters in the space below to see what it spells.

____ Great blue heron

____ Great egret

____ Virginia rail

____ American bittern

____ Greater yellowlegs

____ Spotted sandpiper

R Solitary brownish bird with black and white stripes that points its beak upward, camouflaging it in the grasses.

Y Best known shorebird in the U.S., and it’s called “teeter tail” because its tail bobs constantly.

O It stands four feet high, making it Pennsylvania’s tallest bird.

S This solid white bird stands three feet tall.

P It’s a secretive marsh bird that often runs instead of flushing when startled.

E This bird has a 2-foot wingspan, and in flight its legs extend beyond its tail.

A “fishing bird” with a 5-foot wingspan.

answers on p. 64

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

Hunters in Wisconsin took a record 618,374 deer during the 2000-2001 season, from a herd of 1.8 million animals. Despite the record harvest, biologists say the deer herd could be right back at 1.7-1.8 million by this fall. The high deer numbers caused havoc on Wisconsin's roads, where from July 1999 through June 2000 a record 47,555 vehicle-deer collisions were reported.

Hunters in Maryland took a record 84,776 deer (83,092 whitetails and 1,684 sikas) during the 2000-2001 season — up nine percent from the 77,660 taken during the previous season. The deer harvest breakdown last year included: firearm hunters, 48,248; muzzleloader hunters, 18,287 — 11,055 during the October season and 7,232 during the traditional late season — and bowhunters, 18,241. Garrett County was tops with 7,974 deer taken. Last year hunters donated 61 tons of venison to the Maryland Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry Program.

There were 150,432 deer taken in Ohio during the 2000 season — up nearly 19 percent from 1999.

There were 10,859 deer (7,472 antlered, 3,387 antlerless) taken by hunters in New Hampshire in 2000.

Hunters in New York took a record 294,646 deer in 2000, an increase of nearly 40,000 from the 1999 harvest of 255,959. Steuben County was tops with 20,906 deer taken, including 8,432 bucks.

There were 60,120 elk harvested by hunters in Colorado in 2000, which is up substantially from the 39,700 taken in 1999, and is the highest elk harvest in the U.S.

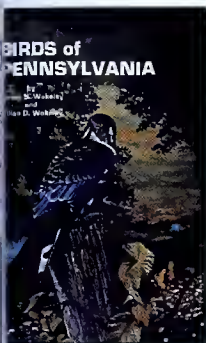
Hunters in Virginia reported taking 186,564 deer in 2000 — a less than two percent decrease from the 190,043 checked in 1999. Bowhunters took 17,154 — up 11 percent from the 15,370 in 1999. Muzzleloader hunters took 46,388 — up 14 percent from the 40,638 taken in 1999. Muzzleloaders accounted for 25 percent of the deer kill last year.

The Wisconsin Senate last spring unanimously passed a constitutional amendment guaranteeing that, "the people have the right to fish, hunt, trap and take game, which shall be managed by law for the public good." The amendment was approved 31-0, but must be passed by two consecutive legislatures and by voters in a statewide referendum before it can take effect. States with protections in their constitutions to guarantee their right to hunt, fish and trap include Alabama, California, Minnesota, North Dakota, Rhode Island and Vermont.

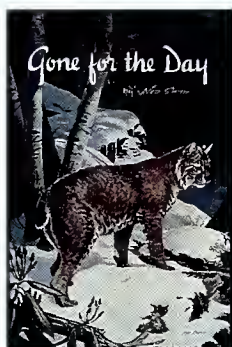
During the November 2000 regular firearms season hunters in Nebraska took a record 43,460 deer. Bowhunters added 4,532 and muzzleloader hunters 5,761 to the total harvest.

Answer: OSPREY.

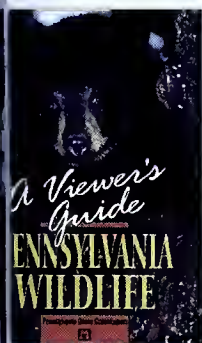
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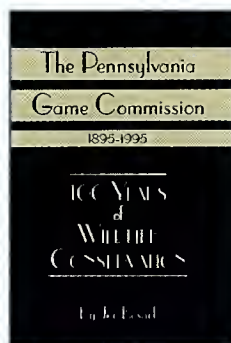
Gone for the Day is a compilation of Game News columns written and illustrated by famed wildlife artist and naturalist, the late Ned Smith.
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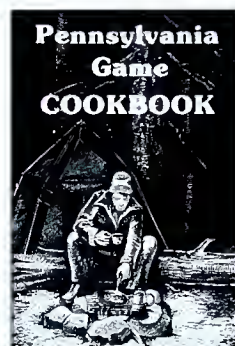
PA residents add 6% sales tax. Make check or money order (no cash, please) payable to Pennsylvania Game Commission and send to Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797, or call 1-888-888-3459; Visa, Discover, MasterCard or American Express accepted.

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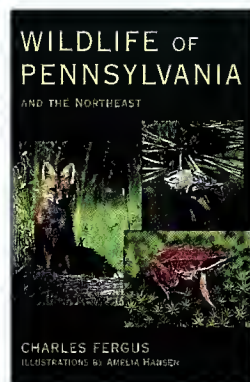
Pennsylvania Game Commission: 1895-1995, by Joe Kosack, covers the agency's first 100 years and includes more than 60 historical photographs.
Price: \$12.26

Pennsylvania Game Cookbook is a collection of nearly 200 recipes for popular, and not so popular, game animals.
Price: \$4.71



Mammals of Pennsylvania, by J. Kenneth Douthett et.al. profiles the state's mammals and their roles in the state's history.
Price: \$9.43

Wildlife of Pennsylvania and the Northeast, by Chuck Fergus blends solid scientific information with his own anecdotes. Covers birds and mammals, along with reptiles and amphibians, 438 pages.
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THE WATCHER, by Marie

Girio Brummett, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. New to Pennsylvania, coyotes are cloaked in mystique. Some people despise them for their predatory habits, others admire them for their intelligence, adaptability and tenacity.



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The Watcher

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R.K. HALLGEMAN



Mammals of the mountain
(from Set No.2)

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The Game Commission's ever popular bird and mammal charts are perfect for homes, classrooms, camps — just about anywhere. Created by internationally renowned artist Ned Smith, these charts feature the state's most common mammal and bird species — 179 in all.

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RIGHT NOW, if you're connected to the Internet, you can from the comfort of your home, buy your hunting and furtaker licenses, apply for an elk license and bobcat permit, order Game Commission books, prints, patches, even buy and renew *Game News* subscriptions, just by visiting "The Outdoor Shop" at www.pgc.state.pa.us. And that's just the beginning. Developed in 1996, the Game Commission website is much more than just a place for one-stop shopping. It's a tremendous source of information.

You cannot get Game Commission news any faster than by watching the "This just in . . ." listing at the top of our website homepage. And if you want to refer back to earlier news releases, click on "Newsroom." This page will direct you to news releases going all the way back to 1996. Want to know if any antlerless deer licenses are available in any particular county? When and where hunter education courses are being offered? What to do if you've lost your hunting license? How many deer were taken in 1998? Or, for that matter, the harvest of any game animal back to 1990, or deer and bear all the way back to 1915? "Hunting Information" will lead you to more interesting information than you can probably imagine, all just a mouse-click away.

Clicking on "Wildlife" will lead you to a wide range of information about Pennsylvania's birds and mammals, from feeding hummingbirds and 10 things you can do to help wildlife, to tracking transmitter-equipped tundra swans on their Arctic nesting grounds and finding out the latest on the fawn study.

"County Information" includes, by county, deer and bear harvest figures since 1993, where hunting and furtaker licenses are sold, and Hunter-Trapper Education Class schedules. The "Products" section (not to be confused with "The Outdoor Shop") includes descriptions of the books and videos, patches and stamps, and fine art prints the Game Commission sells. Check this section out if you want to call in or mail in an order, rather than order online.

Game News, too, is featured on the agency's website. Every month we provide short descriptions of our features, a selection of Field Notes, news items that don't appear elsewhere on the website, and entire articles about Game Commission projects and programs, all as a way of promoting our magazine and reaching a wider audience.

Legislative updates, Middle Creek and Pymatuning programs, Commissioner profiles and a video library round out what you can currently find at www.pgc.state.pa.us.

In essence, the Game Commission website is being designed not only as a service to hunters and trappers, but to promote conservation and outdoor recreation. Land management activities, regional sections that focus on specific land management activities, and calendar of events on a region level are just a few of the ideas being considered as additional website features.

The Internet has certainly taken the communications field by storm. Nearly half of all households now have Internet access, and it's also readily available in schools and libraries. The Game Commission is working hard to develop the best website possible, for everybody interested in wildlife and the outdoors. If you've yet to visit our site, check us out. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

I'm against all horseback riding and bike riding on state game lands. On a game lands tract near me I've noticed trails that riders have made by cutting brush and small trees. Soil erosion is now taking place on these trails.

Let's put a stop to these activities on lands paid for with hunters' dollars.

L. HARTMAN
MYERSTOWN

The Game Commission is currently looking into ways to satisfy the needs of as many outdoor recreationists as possible and still maintain the integrity of our game lands.

Editor:

The article about Baltimore orioles in the May issue caused me to think about how much better it would have been if the magazine was full color inside. Nature is so beautiful, it's a shame not to be able to fully appreciate it.

I certainly would be willing to pay a little more to see color in *Game News*.

R. STEPHANI
KENNETT SQUARE

We're conducting a survey to see how readers may feel about this and other changes to the magazine.

Editor:

I was sorry to hear that the Commission approved the concurrent buck/doe season for this year. I prefer to still-hunt through thick areas, and with this new season format whereby hunters don't have to identify the sex of a

deer, I don't feel safe being out there. I suspect your hunting incident rate will increase substantially.

I most likely will not hunt in Pennsylvania this fall. I have enjoyed hunting in the Keystone State and will miss it. Thanks for the memories.

O. HALEY
INTERVALE, NH

Many people share this same concern, but hunting incident records both here and in other states indicate that being able to shoot any deer is not a safety problem.

Editor:

In June's "Penn's Woods Sketchbook," Bob Sopchick mentions that the whitetail is a pivotal animal that determines whether other species flourish or not. What does he mean by this statement?

G. TRUAX
CRYSTAL SPRING

Deer, when over abundant are capable of overbrowsing their habitat and destroying it for other wild animals as well.

Editor:

On June 24 I was watching a flock of turkeys, some 200 yards away, working the edge of a cornfield. It appeared they were all gobblers of varying ages. When movement along the edge of the treeline between the fields caught my eye, I figured more turkeys were

coming, so imagine my surprise when seven adult Canada geese came charging out of the bushes right at the turkeys. What appeared to be the largest gobbler and one of the geese went at each other for a few seconds, then a few of the others mixed it up.

I've seen turkeys and deer mingle with no problems, as well as plenty of other critters, but this was the first time I've seen a wildlife gang war. It appeared the geese won as the turkeys finally moved off across the field and the geese strutted about the edge, fluffing their feathers and craning their necks in the direction of the turkeys.

What a great video that would have made.

J. FITSER,
ALLENTOWN

Editor:

Every year I return to Pennsylvania to hunt deer with my father. I'm 38 years old, but every trip into the woods with my dad makes me feel like I'm 13 again. I think back to those first hunts we made together: the smells, the sounds, the camaraderie. I still look up to him. The way he carries himself around the camp and in the woods is something I strive to achieve even today. I'm sure I never told him how much all of the time he spent outdoors with me really meant. I just hope he reads this and knows.

R. EICHER,
SOUTHWICK, MA

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.



Graveyard Shift

By William Wasserman

Wyoming County WCO

THE SEPTEMBER SUN had been hot, but now the evening air was warm and pleasant. Despite it growing dark, Tim wanted to continue the game of horseshoes with his family. Work had him arriving home late for weeks, and he relished spending time with them. His kids were growing so fast, and he hated being away so much.

He heard the sedan coming long before it stormed past them. The engine hummed as the old Ford turned off their dirt road onto the state highway. He caught a glimpse of it behind a grove of pines behind them. Two men were inside, the driver with a can to his mouth. He'd seen them around before. They were trouble. Tim heard the engine simmer to a low, throbbing roll and realized they had slowed after reaching the macadam. He motioned his children to get down. There was a field opposite the pines where deer would be grazing. You could count on them being there at dusk. He squatted, waiting for the inevitable gunshot, praying he was wrong. The rifle barked once, its echo ricocheting off the surrounding mountains. Tim ordered his children into the house and sprinted down the dirt road until he came to the highway. The Ford was pulling from the shoulder of the road, and a deer lay thrashing in the grass 50 yards away.

The fawn, barely four months old, was dead when he reached it. Shot through the head, it suffered little. Tim stared unbelievably at its limp body, and a deep and seething anger began to overtake him. The deer was killed on his father's property. His entire family had watched it frolicking there with its mother since June. How could people be so malicious and cruel?

And now the Ford's guttural hum came

back to him. The black sedan was still in sight, turning right a quarter-mile ahead. Tim hunkered down, but he knew they had spotted him. His white T-shirt stood out like a beacon in the dusky field. He continued to watch as the Ford doubled back toward the state road and wondered if he would soon meet them face-to-face. He knew they were armed and had been drinking. The prospect of a confrontation sent shivers down Tim's spine, but he would stand his ground. He could see the driver looking in his direction, but he was hunkered down in the tall grass and a tree line helped hide him. Tim watched as the Ford crept into the intersection and turned away, the engine's heaviness gradually fading away.

He was certain they would be back, but he wanted to get home to call the Game Commission and change into dark clothes. He knew a good hiding spot for when they returned, and he looked forward to being there when they came back.

The air had turned cool as he hurried toward the chapel graveyard, which bordered the highway directly across from where the fawn lay. The country church stood alone, hemmed by a pond in its rear and hay fields on each side. Tim planned to hide behind a tombstone until the poachers returned, but as he got to the highway he noticed the black sedan. It was parked along the berm, 50 yards away, facing him. The engine had been shut off and it seemed to be crouching there like some hulking metal beast.

Tim ran toward the vehicle and was closing in fast when its headlights suddenly blinded him as the engine rumbled to life. Suddenly, the sedan was hurling menacingly toward him. Tim knew he had only a matter of seconds before they would run him down. He dove for the berm, landing hard on his chest and hands as the sedan rocketed by.

It had been close. He felt the warm blast of air as it passed, and his stomach wrenched with the realization that he'd almost been hit. He knew he had to get the license plate number. Tim whipped his head toward the fleeing vehicle. A small bulb illuminated the tag, and his eyes strained as he etched the number into the gravel at the edge of the road with his finger.

I was at a sportsmen's club meeting when I noticed Deputy Jeff Pierce walk in, and I knew immediately that something was up. He had seen my vehicle parked outside and told me that he'd been contacted by dispatch about a poaching incident, and that the informant was waiting for us at a cemetery. I excused myself from the conference and stepped into the night with my deputy.

It was 11 p.m. when we reached the cemetery. Tim told me everything, but was disappointed when I explained that a license number alone might not be enough unless the suspects openly confessed their crime. That, I felt, was unlikely, especially knowing that they had tried to run him down. We needed more. A description of the men in the sedan would be essential to a successful prosecution, but Tim had been too far away to get a good look at them. "Let's go out and get the deer," I said. "If we find a bullet in the carcass we may be able to match it to a gun."

We walked single file through the damp field, and when Tim's flashlight illuminated the spot where the deer

had been, we realized they must have picked it up while Tim was changing clothes.

"Good!" I said.

Tim looked puzzled. "Why do you say that?"

"Because now we have something to tie them to the incident. Deer season is closed. If we find their car, it'll probably have traces of blood on it, which would give us enough probable cause for a search warrant. We pop the trunk, get the deer and they're history. Under the law, we only have to prove they possessed a deer killed in closed season. We don't have to prove they shot it. They'd each face a \$500 fine."

"So what's the next move?" Tim asked.

"We trace the license number you gave us and go after them."

The tag came back as a 1989 Ford sedan registered to a woman in the next county, but her last name was common among the locals living in the area, so Jeff and I searched the vicinity before leaving the county. It was past midnight when we finally gave up looking for the sedan in the immediate area and headed for the bordering county. We had a name, a box number and a street address, and our hopes were high. If we found the Ford, we felt certain an arrest would follow.

After a 25-mile drive, however, we discovered that the post office had changed its street numbers. The address no longer existed. Jeff and I cruised the sleepy little town, exploring its dimly lit streets for the Ford, but we quickly realized it was futile.

The next day I drove back to the town and asked the postmaster about the address we had been searching for. She told me that the woman and her husband had moved to Susquehanna County three months ago, then scribbled on a piece of paper and handed it to me. I recognized the place. It was just over the Wyoming County line.

It was 10:30 a.m. when I eased my truck down the long dusty lane. I didn't expect to find anyone home. It was too late for that, I thought. But drawing closer to the

apartment complex, I spotted a black Ford parked along the corner of the building. I pulled behind the vehicle, blocking it, and checked the license number. It matched.

My eyes focused on the key still in the trunk. It seemed so right. This wasn't a case of absent-mindedness by some distracted motorist. The key was part of a plan. And it was at that moment that I knew beyond doubt I had them. A fawn would be shot, so they could get it back to the vehicle quickly. A turn of the jutting key would pop the trunk, and then they'd be off. I had a feeling they had done it many times before, as I stooped at the rear of the Ford and examined it for blood or deer hair.

Something flashed. I looked up and in the apartment window a drawn shade bobbed slightly.

Someone had been watching. Perhaps both poachers were inside planning their next move. There was a door by the window, and I waited for it to burst open. Moving alongside the black sedan for cover, I stood in the blazing sun. Minutes passed like months, but nothing happened.

I glanced into the window of the sedan. A dozen empty beer cans were strewn

about, and a Styrofoam cooler sat on the back seat. Like many jacklighters I've encountered, these men had been driving around with a loaded gun in their vehicle, taking potshots at deer while under the influence of alcohol.

I stepped cautiously to the front door and knocked on it. No one answered. Certain someone was inside, I got in my vehicle and circled the building and parked at the opposite end where I could watch the car. Not five minutes later a woman in her mid-30s hustled out the front door toward the black sedan. The woman spotted me, which only served to make her hurry. She opened the car door and jumped in. The sedan's engine cranked vigorously then thundered to life. I dropped my gearshift and punched the accelerator, speeding forward.

"State conservation officer," I shouted over the sedan's deafening roar. "Shut off your engine!"

The woman stared back defiantly. "Get out of my way, mister!" she bellowed. "I'm leaving and you ain't stopping me!"

Again, I identified myself then said, "This car is evidence. You aren't taking it anywhere. I am ordering you out of this vehicle immediately!"

"And what are you going to do if I don't?"

"I'll take any steps necessary to prevent you from moving this vehicle," I answered. "Now, turn off the engine and get out of the car."

She sat contemptuously, her eyes boring right through me, then gradually released her grip on the steering wheel, shut off the en-



Bill Wasserman recently published a new book, *The Best of 'It's a Wild Life.'* Many *Game News* readers no doubt remember the "Looking Back" column Bill wrote for *Game News* in 1993, about his experiences as a WCO in Montgomery and Wyoming counties. A prolific writer, Bill has also been writing a column, "It's a Wild Life" for his local newspaper, The New Age-Examiner.

Featured in this 8½ x 11 hardcover volume are 52 of some of Bill's best columns. Complementing Bill's accounts are stunning full color photographs by John Wasserman (Bill's twin brother and fellow WCO) and Ray Massacesi.

The Best of 'It's a Wild Life' can be ordered from The New Age-Examiner, P.O. Box 59, Tunkhannock, PA 18657 (570/836-2123). Visa and MasterCard accepted. The price is \$26.50, including state sales tax; add \$2.75 for shipping.

gine and stepped out. "Just who in the #!*\$% are you, mister?"

"Ma'am, I've already identified myself. I'm a state conservation officer. I have reason to believe this vehicle was involved in a poaching incident last night."

"Last night!" she scoffed, cutting me off. "I was home all night. I didn't even drive my car."

"How about your husband?"

"He was here, too."

"I'd like to talk to him."

"You can't talk to him, he's at work." She glanced toward her apartment. "I'm going to call my lawyer right now."

"I think that would be a good idea," I said. "This vehicle is registered to you, and if it contains evidence of an unlawfully killed deer, you could be prosecuted."

She folded her arms across her chest and said, "First, I'm going to call my husband at work."

"Where does he work?"

"I won't tell you that."

"Well, then, why don't you call? I'd like to talk to him, too."

Now her eyes dropped and her voice softened. "Look, officer," she said pleadingly, "I just started a new job this week. I need my car. You can't keep it here."

"I know a simple way to solve this," I said. "There is a key in the trunk of your car. The car is registered to you. If you would simply turn the key and allow me to look inside, we could end this right now. You say your husband and you were both home last night and the car wasn't driven. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe this isn't the car. If I don't find evidence that a deer was in the trunk, I'll leave right now and you can go to work."

The woman turned, walked back to the trunk, jerked the key out of its latch and plopped it in her purse. "You may be able to keep the car, but you ain't keeping the key."

"Ma'am, I intend to contact the district attorney for a search warrant. I think you should leave the key. I don't want to risk damaging your trunk with a crowbar if the warrant is approved."

She stared at me for a moment, mulling over what I had just told her, then hitched her purse under her arm. "I'm leaving for work now," she said, and began walking away down the dusty road. I watched the woman disappear around a bend, and then waited to see if she'd change her mind and return with the key. She didn't.

My only recourse was to obtain a search warrant. I stayed with the vehicle to make sure it wouldn't be tampered with, and radioed WCO Chuck Arcovitch for assistance. Although the violation had occurred in Wyoming County, my investigation had led me into Chuck's district. He arrived within minutes. I filled him in then radioed WCO Don Burchell. Don was patrolling north of us near the courthouse. He would get a search warrant from the district attorney. Wading through a myriad of legal ramifications, Don completed the paperwork and pulled into the apartment

complex three hours later with the warrant.

I stepped over to the Ford and chuckled out loud. Although the woman had run off with the trunk key, in her haste she had forgotten to lock the doors. Opening the driver's side, I scanned the interior. On the console, between the front seats, were a single empty .25-06 case and a clip containing two live rounds. The math worked. My informant had heard only one shot. A bloody, blue plaid shirt lay in a heap on the passenger's seat, and the entire vehicle littered with empty beer cans. We photographed the shirt and ammunition, bagged them for evidence, and tried to enter the trunk by removing the back seat. It wouldn't budge.

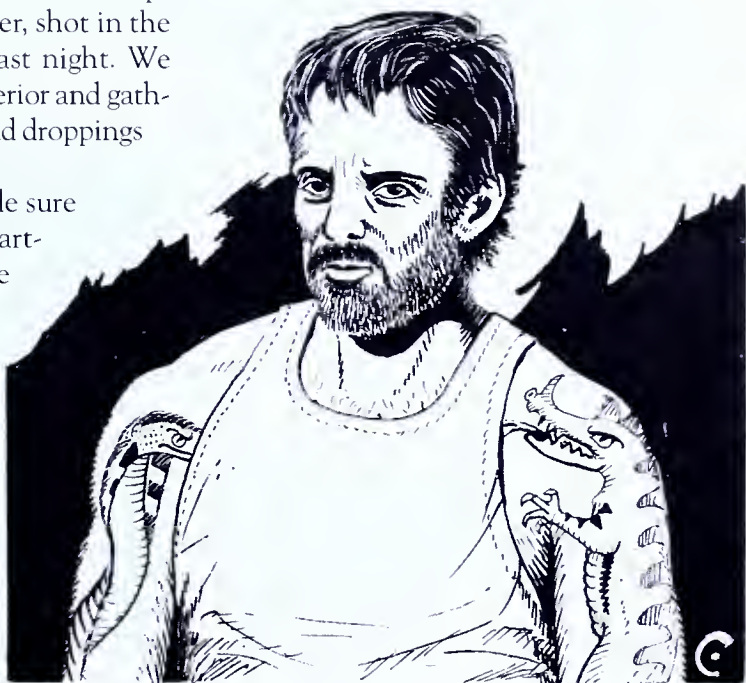
Because there was no interior trunk release, we had to force the trunk open, eventually snapping the lock with a hammer and crowbar. Old engine parts, empty cardboard boxes, fishing equipment and beer cans were strewn everywhere. Among the debris, however, was evidence a deer had been there. In the trunk's left corner, congealed blood lay in a thick, crimson pool. Deer hair and droppings were evident. The blood was still tacky and fresh, and the hair light, from a summer coat. Judging by the placement of congealed blood and droppings, it had been a small deer, shot in the head, like the fawn killed last night. We photographed the trunk's interior and gathered samples of hair, blood and droppings for evidence.

Officer Burchell had made sure his warrant included the apartment. Stepping inside we methodically searched for additional evidence. I opened the refrigerator and discovered a pot of venison stew, then popped the freezer door and found a deer heart and a package of frozen deer meat, each wrapped separately in plastic. I placed them in

an evidence bag. WCO Chuck Arcovitch found a bloody scrap of deer meat in the kitchen sink and secured it. A bloodstained pair of work boots by the kitchen door was also taken.

Burchell walked into the bedroom and discovered three firearms in a closet. The 22-caliber rifle and shotgun were left, but the .25-06 Remington matched the ammunition found in the Ford's console and was seized for evidence. We left a copy of the warrant and a receipt listing everything seized on the kitchen table, then I locked the door and we left.

I called the poacher's residence a week later and spoke to the woman who had run off with the trunk key. She said her husband, Danny Badd, had hit a deer a month ago, and that that was probably where the blood in the trunk had come from. When I mentioned the bloody shirt, she said it belonged to her brother who had hit his head while swimming. She also claimed we got mud all over her new rugs during the search and wanted to be compensated. I reminded her that it hadn't rained in six weeks and that



there was no mud anywhere near her home.

"I don't care if it didn't rain for a year! I want new rugs!" she said, and then slammed down the phone.

Several days later WCO Arcovitch called me. He was investigating a complaint against Danny Badd. A neighbor saw him dumping deer entrails in the field by his apartment. Badd claimed the deer was a roadkill from Wyoming County and Arcovitch asked me to check it out. I met Danny in Meshoppen, and he showed me bloodstains on the highway where he claimed to have picked up the deer.

"Okay, Danny," I said. "I'll pass the information along to WCO Arcovitch. Now what about the deer that was in your trunk two weeks ago?"

Badd shrugged and said nothing. I

told him I had obtained considerable evidence from his house and his wife's car, and had forwarded it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory. Through DNA, they could match the blood in his trunk to the blood in the field where the deer had been shot. Convinced he had killed the deer, I intended to prosecute him and his wife as soon as the lab report came back. He mulled over what I had just told him. "Sounds like you got me pretty good," he said. "If I plead guilty, will you leave my wife out of this? She wasn't involved. I took her car, man. She ain't no deer killer."

And so the case finally ended. Although he had never been identified, the evidence against him was overwhelming. Badd pled guilty to killing a deer in closed season and paid \$534 in fines and costs. His hunting and trapping privileges were revoked for three years. □

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Powder, Patch and Ball, and Now, Bullets

By Dave Ehrig

KEEP YER POWDER DRY, yer back green and yer nose to the wind," was good advice offered by 18th century muzzleloading riflemen, pioneers who survived by their keen wit and unerring eyes. "Powder, patch and ball will prove all" mode of thinking certainly brought home the venison in Pennsylvania for more than 300 years, as our ancestors had few other technologies to choose from.

But flintlock deer hunting was and is a difficult method to hunt deer, compared to the simplicity of launching arrows with mechanical bows or the speed of stuffing cartridges in modern repeating guns. Shooting a flintlock demands practice in loading each of the components, and patience with making the system work.

The flintlock limitations that were welcomed by deer hunters in Pennsylvania's initial season in 1974 were the reason that this season was special. Never envisioned as a deer management tool, or a highly effective long range shooting sport, the flint-

lock deer hunt was offered as an ultimate challenge for late-season hunters. Knowing that the slower velocities generated by black powder, and the lower energies generated by the "ballistically challenged" round ball would dictate that hunters use their skills to get close to deer: this season is an "under 100 yards" deer hunt. And, even with these limitations, Pennsylvanians gladly accepted the challenge, and their successes in humanely taking deer are legendary.

"Making meat, the old-fashioned way, with black powder" is a well-respected description of why Pennsylvanians have taken up the sport. History, tradition and nostalgia are all intrinsic qualities of the special flintlock deer season, but in 2000, the rules changed. The sabotted, jacketed, hollow-pointed, and even copper solid bullets have been added to the vocabulary of flintlock hunters. Historically wrong, traditionally impaired, but politically correct by marketing standards, the conical bullet in all its myriad of types, shapes and sizes, must now be added to the flintlock hunter's learning curve.

Does a conical "slug" bullet strike the same spot as a round ball if the shooter uses the same load with both projectiles? Surprisingly, the answer might be yes, if the target is within 25 yards. The real difference between the ball and slug takes place when the effects of air resistance, wind, gyroscopic rotation, velocity and mass have over time and distance are considered.





HOLLOW-BASED Minie balls have twice the energy of round balls, but they sacrifice velocity and accuracy in rifles with slower rates of twist.

To make sense of all the math and physics involved when comparing the flight of a round ball to that of a conical bullet, try to understand the analogy of thrown baseballs and footballs. In order to throw a fastball over home plate, the pitcher adds just the right amount of rotation, which has been learned from years of practice. Too much spin will cause the ball to “curve” away from the straight line desired. Too little spin will cause the ball to “knuckleball” out of control.

Patched round balls, like baseballs, need just the right amount of rotation to stabilize them in flight. At velocities under 1,400 feet per second (which are normally generated with light target loads of powder), a faster rate of twist will still stabilize the trajectory of a round ball.

Faster velocities (which are generated in hunting loads of powder), however, require a slower rotation in the barrel if the ball is not to “curve” toward the target. While a 1:48 twist works well under 50 yards, or with slower velocities with round balls, it becomes apparent at longer yardages that this is not the optimum rotation. Slower rates of rifling twist, traditionally 1:60 to 1:72, give round balls their accuracy out to 100 yards. Even slower rates of twist are necessary in heavy rifles at 200 yards and beyond, because

they fire a round ball at velocities above 2,000 fps.

Football (like conical bullets) fly differently than baseballs (or round balls). If the wrist and fingers don't impart a high rate of rotation to the football, it won't make a stable spiral, straight to the intended target. Low rates of rotation make footballs wobble and fly out of control.

A very slow rate of rotation, which might be designed for a round ball barrel, will impart an unstable flight to a slug. A rifling twist of 1:48 will not handle an elongated bullet — sabbotted or not — with the accuracy of a barrel that has a faster rifling twist. Barrels specifically designed for sabot bullets are now manufactured with rotations of 1:30 to 1:20. Slugs shot at velocities more than 1,600 feet per second need the fastest rates of rotation to stabilize their performance. Therefore, the longer and faster the bullet, the faster the rifling rotation needed.

If you have decided to make the switch to slugs, a new barrel may be in order. But first, determine what kind of barrel might be best. Modern muzzleloading bullets can be divided into three groups, each with its own special barrel requirements.

The first group is best described as lead slugs. The common ingredient found in all muzzleloading bullets is lead. This is a logical choice because it is the heaviest, non-radioactive metal that is abundantly and economically available. Copper, $2\frac{1}{2}$ times less dense than lead (less kinetic energy at the same velocity) is triple the cost. Bismuth is one proton denser than lead, but is harder to come by and four times the cost. Lead is superior in carrying energy downrange, and its high molecular cohesion means that it does a superior job of staying together during acceleration and impact on a game animal. The mushrooming effect, or obturation, would normally disintegrate other metals, but not lead. Its greater density gives deeper penetration and more total release of the energy than found in any other speeding mass.

Lead slugs are marketed under names such as Hornady Great Plains Bullets, Buffalo Bullets, T/C Maxi-Hunter, T/C Maxi-Ball, Buffalo Ball-ets, CVA Buckslayer and Colorado Conicals. What they all have in common is increased weight, greater sectional density, and better ballistic coefficient. Their increased weight compared to the round ball increases felt recoil, result in slower velocities, and they're more expensive. They also laminate the bore with lead. They do, however, have the capability of carrying more energy downrange.

Slugs penetrate better than round balls because they have greater sectional density. This is a result of their greater weight in relation to their diameter. This allows the various types of slugs to retain their velocity better than round balls. Their ballistic coefficient is higher because of the ratio between their sectional density and their shape. In other words, their pointed noses are aerodynamically more "slippery." Not only does the same caliber slug come in different nose configurations, they're also available in different weights. They have different bearing surfaces against the grooves of the rifling (some designed as lubrication grooves), and even their gas-sealing bases are different. Muzzle velocities of slugs are much slower than round balls, and slugs will shed almost one third of their velocity at the 100-yard mark, but their retained energy is better due to their greater mass.

Unfortunately, your shoulder will tell you that you launched a missile heavier than a round ball.

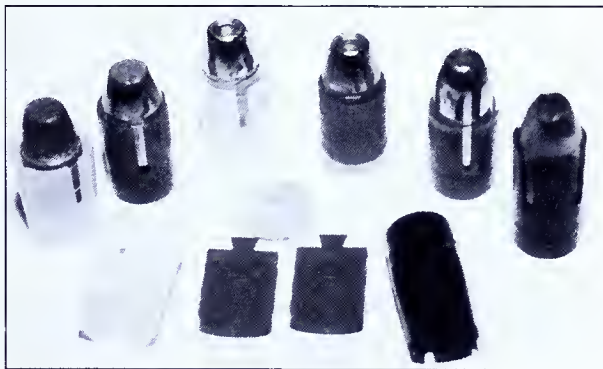
You must take more care to seat the lead slug on the powder, as well as checking its position from time to time as you hunt. Lead slugs have a tendency to jar loose from their

seated position. If an airspace develops, an accident could occur. "Detonation" is a phenomenon that occurs when powder burns, is pushed forward from the breech into the air space created by the slug that slid forward, and then detonates at the base of the projectile. Higher than normal pressures occur, causing a good steel barrel to swell, which will never allow the barrel to be used safely and accurately again. A worst-case scenario is a weakened, flawed or ancient iron barrel that bursts, which could harm the shooter and nearby spectators.

Another problem inherent of lead slugs is the "lead laminating" of the bore. Lead is a soft metal that shears off in the deeper 0.008- to 0.012-inch grooves of a round ball barrel. Even on a 0.005-inch slug barrel, lead laminates itself to the lands of the barrel with each shot. If this lead is not thoroughly scrubbed out, accuracy and the ease of reloading can be affected. Fortunately, modern solvents and bronze brushes solve this problem.

The second group of slugs is best described under the family name of sabots. Plastic patches around a bullet were introduced in the mid-1970s under the name Poly-Patch. The idea was simple: eliminate the cutting of cloth and messiness of grease by simply inserting the round ball into a soft plastic, gas-sealing cup. In warm weather, it works; in cold weather, the round ball may roll forward out of the

FROM L to R, .50 Speer sabot, Speer sabot with XTP bullet, T/C .50 Break-o-Way sabot, Remington .50 Core-Lokt bullet with sabot, and Knight Red Hot Barnes bullet.



cup, creating a dangerous situation. Plastic patches soon earned a bad reputation, in spite of the improved cup that no longer allows the slippage. But plastic does pose an environmental problem, they are an eyesore and non-biodegradable, and had no place in a primitive flintlock rifleman's sport. Then, in the 1990s, a new idea was introduced: placing jacketed pistol bullets into a larger shoe (sabot is a French word for shoe or sheath) of plastic. The sabot had arrived.

Sabots are known in many different forms. Thompson/Center Break-O-Way sabots split into two pieces releasing the bullet, while most others open up their petals, slits that run longitudinally, to allow the bullet's release.

Names like Hornady XTP, Nosler Partition Sabots and S.H.O.T.S., MML Sabots, Swift A-Frame Sabots, Silver Lightning Sabots, Barnes MZ Sabots, and Precision Extremes HPBT, among others, intrigue muzzleloading hunters.

Most sabotted bullets are 44- and 45-caliber pistol bullets that have been "plastic wrapped," so that they fit tightly into the 50- and 54-caliber bores. They possess a smaller diameter, and have a better BC and sectional density than round balls, but their 250- to 500-grain bullet weights are deceiving, much heavier than the same caliber round ball, and hence, slower. But, when shooting at really big game, or game animals beyond 100 yards, their retained energy is far more impressive than the round ball.

Plastic sabots do not like the deeper rifling found on round ball barrels, as exploding gasses will bypass the bullet through the deep grooves. The inconsistent pressures lead to inaccuracy. That is why a shallow-grooved, fast twist rifling is needed to shoot sabot bullets effectively. You will need to ex-

periment with different types of bullet weights, sabot types and nose configurations until you find the one that works well in your gun. But remember, the soft plastic sabots do laminate the lands of your rifling and this will affect ease of loading, as well as accuracy. To keep the plastic lamination to a minimum, strong plastic solvents and a bronze bore brush are necessary. This lamination problem caused the evolution of the third group of muzzleloading slugs — the plastic gas check slugs.

The idea of a gas check began at the turn of the last century. Gunsmiths found that the higher pressures generated by smokeless powders would sometimes blow gases by the soft lead of the slug's base. To guarantee consistent velocities, copper was mated to the base of the lead bullet to more tightly seal the grooves of the rifling. Today, a plastic gas check is attached to the bullet's base. This gives the advantage of sealing the blow-by of gases, ease of loading, and accuracy of a lead bullet, all while reducing the amount of plastic laminate on the lands of the rifling. Bullets such as the CVA Powerbelt, Copper Magnum Bullets and Black Belt Bullets have plastic gas checks at their bases, but because they do not run a plastic bearing surface between the bullet and the bore, they are not considered sabots.

A thorough understanding of modern muzzleloading bullets would not be complete if it ignored bullet performance on deer-size game. Bullet performance is a result of several variables: velocity, mass and the ability to expand (mushroom or obturate.) Slow velocities are not compatible with muzzleloading bullets. Velocities under 1,400 feet per second are too slow for the bullet to generate enough energy, expand and penetrate. Because higher velocities are desirable, consider that they are directly related to bullet weight.

Patched round balls are the lightest bullets currently available. With a given powder charge, round balls are faster than slugs. This is important because it means that

they get to the target faster, usually more accurately, and expand better. Why, then, did the jacketed bullet come into existence? When lead slugs came into existence, their increased velocities caused considerable lead-laminating in rifle bores. Accuracy with any round that exceeded 2,000 fps suffered with succeeding shots. To remedy this, gunsmiths began to place lead cores in copper jackets. The copper didn't affect the steel bore as much as other metals, but it did bring a new problem to the hunt. Copper jackets retarded the mushrooming effect of lead. This created a huge loss of shocking power that hunters expected from their bullets, and were used to with round balls. Sure, there was an exit hole, but the animal didn't collapse from shock as quickly.

Overnight, entrepreneurs offered the hunter a myriad of bullet designs that were supposed to "mushroom back with tremendous shocking power" just like the lowly, lead round ball does, but the copper jacket prevented that from happening. Bullet designers began to split the jacket at the nose, then cammed the lead tips, developed the hollow point and, finally, the ballistic tip. Still, all of these improvements only gave the bullet the capability to do what a slower soft lead round ball could do — expand to 100 percent of its diameter.

The advent of copper-solids, albeit hollow-pointed and petalled, introduced another consideration into the mix — metallurgy. Lead has been the traditional bullet metal, but throughout history, iron, tin, nickel, tungsten, bismuth and other metals have been tried. Is there something new

and improved on the horizon? Perhaps, but there is a problem with bullet expansion with anything other than lead.

The real culprit in bullet expansion is slow velocity. Heavier bullets travel slower than lighter bullets with the same powder charge. Recoil increases proportionately as shooters increase the powder charge to attain the velocities that jacketed bullets need to expand. Felt recoil becomes considerable. For recoil-shy hunters, the soft push of a normal round ball load is an advantage in accurate shooting. In 2000 the legalization of slugs, sabot bullets, and gas check bullets for muzzleloaders came about. Marketing has been successful at convincing new muzzleloading hunters that they can't kill a deer without dropping "three of these pellets and one of these sabot bullets."

Pennsylvania flintlock hunters know better. Three hundred years of history and 27 years of recent success in the flintlock deer season have proved the reliability and benefits of the lowly round ball. But, if you are going to pursue whitetails with a flintlock and one of the many varieties of muzzleloading bullets, be sure to do your homework.

After all is said and done, however, and when the smoke clears, keep in mind that it was the accuracy of a well-placed, practiced round that brought home the venison; not the rhetoric from the debate of which bullet is best for a flintlock. □

COVER PAINTING BY RITA HALDEMAN

SEPTEMBER 1 is the unofficial beginning of fall for many Keystone State hunters, as that's when the season for mourning doves typically opens. As many hunters know, there's no better way to shake off the rust from the smoothbore swing than by trying to get ahead of a twisting, darting dove. Despite decreasing numbers of hunters, more doves are harvested in Pennsylvania than any other game bird. Carry a thermos of water, plenty of shotshells stuffed with number 8s, and then set up along a travel corridor between harvested grain fields for the gray speedsters.

"There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before."

— Robert Lynd

A Special Place

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author



FOR THE FIFTEENTH time since 1985, a convoy of canoes and kayaks is carrying biologists and birders on their annual trip to a special spot in the Susquehanna. I'm pleasantly surprised at how warm and sunny it is, as it's only the first of May — perfect weather for a float down the river. From upstream, Wade Island, the only known nesting site in Pennsylvania for great egrets, looks much like any other island in the river. Its muddy shores are lined with river birch and silver maples, but as we get closer, it becomes quite apparent that this island is different from the rest. The warning screams of hundreds of birds are reminiscent of a Hitchcock film, and chills begin to make my arm hairs rise.

It is important to remember that human disturbance could have irreversible effects on the nesting birds and their habitat. Wade Island is posted as a restricted area by the Game Commission to protect the birds, and entering the island is illegal.

I let the kayak drift toward the shore, staring skyward in awe as I begin to realize that all of the dark spots in the trees are nests — hundreds of them — and that none of their residents are happy to see me here. Great egrets — the tall, lanky white birds that always seemed surreal when, as a child, I'd spot them on the water — are now right before me. Though now, as they shout their disapproval at my presence, they appear much smaller and not nearly as graceful. But they're not the only birds on the island. Black-crowned night-herons and double-crested cormorants also nest here, and they, too, are upset by the fact that eight humans have invaded their colony.

After drifting the length of the island, we take out on the southern tip to begin the task that brought us here — identifying and counting the nests. "If they're up high and tightly put together, they're egrets," I'm told by Cal Butchkoski, PGC wildlife technician. "If they're more loosely packed and among lower branches, then they're herons." Easy enough. Eileen Butchkoski, official recorder for the survey, informs the group of the procedure for re-

WADE ISLAND ROOKERY NEST COUNT

Year	Common Egret	Black-Crowned Night-Heron	Double-Crested Cormorant
1991	81	275	0
1992	161	252	0
1994	133	238	0
1995	136	230	0
1996	155	200	1
1997	131	99	1
1998	144	181	2
1999	159	120	4
2000	148	134	9
2001	166	93	11

IN ALL, 166 great egret nests were counted on Wade Island, up from 148 the year before. Black-crowned night-heron numbers, however, fell from 134 in 2000, to 93 this year, making it the second largest nesting site for black-crowned night-herons, behind the Creek Road colony in Lancaster County.

porting nest findings. "If the tree is numbered, give that first. If not, say 'unnumbered.' Next, give me the number of egret nests, then the number of heron nests." Again, sounds easy enough.

And so begins my experience as a bird surveyor. Cal and Dauphin County WCO Mark Fair head up the western edge of the island. Cindy Dunn and Ron Freed, Executive Director and Policy Analyst for the Pennsylvania Audubon Society, cover the middle of the island, while Jeanne Harris, from DCNR's Bureau of Forestry, and I head up the eastern side of the island.

I've never before set foot on an island in the river, and if I weren't treading near the edge where the water is constantly visible, I'd probably forget that I was even on an island. The landscape resembles the forests familiar to me and, except for the screeching residents, is much like any other southern Pennsylvania woodland.

After taking only a few steps, the process begins. At first I rely on Jeanne to help me identify the nests, because they all seem to look alike. Some look tightly packed, but are in among lots of branches. Is it a heron or an egret? But after I'm able to see both types of nests and compare them, the

task is relatively simple. From then on there is rarely a quiet moment. Figures are called out to Eileen from all sides of the island. "Tree number 73! Four egrets! Zero herons!" "Unnumbered tree! Zero egrets! Four herons! Three cormorants!" "Canada goose nest! Three eggs!"

Before I know it, we're at the end of the island and I wish there were more nests to count. But my disappointment doesn't last long as we head back to the boats to continue downriver to

where, I'm told, we'll find yellow-crowned night-herons. Indeed, after walking upstream, one is spotted, perched silently in a tree, keeping watch over its nest. This short survey reveals six yellow-crown nests, three of which have birds incubating or nearby.

And so ends my experience as a bird surveyor. The beautiful weather, picturesque island and its unique inhabitants have made this a perfect day that I'll always remember. □



BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON nests are put together loosely and can be found in the lower branches of the trees on Wade Island. Great egret nests are more tightly packed and are found higher up in the trees.



It's That Time of Year Again

By Carl W. McCardell

I KNOW that the hunting seasons are right around the corner when I need a wheelbarrow to haul the outdoor catalogs from the mailbox to the house. These advertisements all have the same message: You don't have everything you'll need this year. Well, they don't actually say that, but you get that feeling when you discover how inadequate your hunting supplies are.

You like boots? They've got boots. Boy, do they have boots. There's hiking, climbing, insulated, heavily insulated, duck hunting, goose hunting, survivor and camp boots.

You're not really prepared until you have a \$200 pair of leather boots guaranteed not to leak.

How about a triple or quadruple, layered coat designed to be worn in weather from 50 degrees all the way down to minus 30? If it starts to warm up, you can just peel off a layer or two. Now, figure out where to put this extra baggage after bagging your deer.

Did I mention gadgets? There are deer calls, duck calls, goose calls, dove calls, turkey calls and even squirrel calls. Hey, I've never noticed a rabbit call. Now wouldn't that be fantastic? No more having to go through the brush and

briars that tear your fancy new hunting breeches. Oh, that's why there isn't a rabbit call. If you didn't rip your pants to shreds this season, you wouldn't need to buy a new pair next year.

How did our ancestors ever get by without a 50-power spotting scope? One of those new hearing devices guaranteed to pick up sound 100 yards away would have astounded Daniel Boone. How about camouflage clothes? If you need camo, they've got camo. With the right pattern, the well-dressed nimrod can look just like a clump of brush, part of a swamp, a stately tree, reeds, grass and even a drift of snow. I'm waiting for a new, suburban camo design. It would make the hunter look like a distant housing development. We all know that's where the deer hide after the shooting begins on the first day.

Need a treestand? They start at around \$80 and go up to \$400 or more. What ever happened to just climbing a stout tree and perching on a limb for a while?

Do you remember when each company had only a few basic bows to choose from? Now, choosing a bow is worse than trying to pick out a car from a huge used car dealership. In addition to camo designs, there is pull-weight to consider, not to mention lengths and widths. Do you want to be modern with a compound in your hands, or do you want to rough it by using a recurve or longbow?

Not that long ago, one little box call was all that was necessary for turkey hunters. Now, the poor guy or gal just starting out is really confused, trying to

select a slate call, mouth call and who knows what other fancy design they might find. And it's not enough to sound like a turkey. A crow call, owl call or some other animal call is needed for getting turkeys to gobble. I think the manufacturers would

make a bundle if they made one to sound like a car door slamming. I know many hunters who have located gobblers that way.

I hope the product reps realize I'm just having a little fun. I have to deal with several in my line of work. I really look forward to the mail when the weather starts to cool down at the end of summer. The catalogs help get me in the hunting mood.

There is one piece of equipment I refuse to take along when the season arrives, yet I know many hunters who wouldn't be without this item when in the field. And I can't even blame the outdoor manufacturers for this one: It's called a telephone. Now here's a great idea for those in the business of selling outdoor gear. Make a phone with a camo pattern. You'll make a fortune. Please don't send me a complimentary one in the mail, though. If I carried one in the woods, it would probably ring just about the time I was lining up my sights on a big buck. And to make matters worse, a telemarketer would be on the other end. □





Teaming Up

By Michael T. Hur

When the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania decided they wanted to do something to help create high quality habitat for

wildlife, they had no idea how much they could accomplish in so little time. They offered their assistance to Lehigh County WCO Mike Beahm, who selected a 500-acre tract in Lehigh County that had become heavily damaged by illegal ATV use and was in danger of being closed to public hunting. On a warm Sunday in late April this year, more than 20 volunteers from the organization pitched in to remove tires and debris from the property, as well as create border cuttings and plant trees for habitat.

Volunteers picked up hundreds of tires during the project. Arrangements were made to have these tires disposed of properly. Also, a dumpster was brought in to carry away trash and debris that was picked up in the woods and along roadways.



WCO MIKE BEAHM used a chain saw to fell carefully selected trees around the border of the project, to provide sunlight for new plantings. The trees were left lying to provide habitat for wildlife and to reduce access to illegal ATV use.

for Wildlife



The National Wild Turkey Federation donated protective tree shelters, which help the trees get off to a good start by conserving water, preventing competition from other vegetation, and protecting the trees from browsing deer and bear. Here ROY LERCH, a long-time Deputy WCO, tapes a shelter to a wooden stake for support.



Hundreds of holes were dug to plant several species of trees, including saw-tooth oak, crabapple and Chinese chestnut, provided by the Game Commission. EMILY and KADEE SCHWLAM enjoyed spending the sunny day planting trees.



Several established apple trees were also planted, watered and fenced. STEVE PARADIS, WCO MIKE BEAHM, AND RICK MOSER check out one of the new trees.



The group gathers for a picture after a long day of satisfying work. More than one hundred trees were planted during the four hours of cooperation between the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania and the Game Commission.



Thunder on the Hill

By Jim Fitser

Early season goose hunting can be both frustrating and fun. Success can be improved by learning a few lessons, such as when there's fog in the valleys there will be thunder on the hill.

HUNTING early season Canada geese can, to say the least, be frustrating. Because cornfields — primary late season feeding areas — are far from harvest, hunting the birds in September means finding the grass fields where they are feeding. Preseason scouting is one of the keys to success: Locate local flocks, then find out where and when they are feeding, as well as their flight paths.

Preseason scouting isn't necessarily limited to the weeks before the opening of the early season. Actually, my early experience in scouting came quite by accident. Before the advent of the early goose season, I noticed geese flying over one of my favorite dove hunting locations. The first few times I didn't give any thought about hunting the geese, because I was after doves. Finally, one warm and muggy evening, when the doves weren't flying, several flocks of geese came over, and it suddenly dawned on me that this might not be a bad place to set up for some goose hunting during what was then the "regular" goose season in the fall. As it turned out, the spot turned out to be not only fairly productive for goose hunting, but I also got some ducks.

Obviously, after the inception of the early goose season in the early '90s, I was paying much closer attention to geese. I began to look for flocks, flight patterns and fields they preferred. This turned out to be both easier and more frustrating for me.

Living in the Lehigh Valley puts me in the midst of literally thousands of Canada geese. They make Lake Muhlenberg and Trexler Park Lake, both located within Allentown's city limits, their home base. In fact, the city has tried to drive the birds away, because they have made such a mess of the surrounding grass and walkways with their droppings. However, even after the Game Commission rounded up and moved hundreds of the birds during their molt period one year, it had little effect in decreasing the goose population.

The lakes are a major attraction to many local people, too, and it's not uncommon to see folks shoveling bushels of corn and throwing loaves of bread and rolls to the geese and ducks. It's a favorite place for

parents to take their children — until the gooey gob on little sneakers or clenched in tiny fingers becomes troublesome.

Other regions of the state are also experiencing goose problems. In the northeast, for example, large flocks can be found in Kirby Park, adjacent to the Susquehanna River near Wilkes-Barre. The birds fly the river in both directions, some seeking feeding areas to the north and others to the south. Hunters are beginning to spend more time on and along the river in this part of the state, as well as along the Delaware River, especially its more northern reaches.

Spending time around these sites in early morning and late afternoon can give hunters an idea when the birds are flying out to feed. It's quite a thrill to see hundreds of geese in flock after flock lift off the water. Sometimes they simply take off and fly around the immediate area, then come back within a few minutes to land gracefully upon the lakes, apparently flying just for exercise. Most of the time, however, they're off to feed. Paying attention to the general direction of their flight paths can pay off when looking for areas to hunt. Hunting geese where they are feeding can be a problem, though.

In my area, the birds often go only a short distance, landing in fields along Interstate 78 within honking distance of the Lehigh Valley Hospital complex, or other nearby fields closed to hunting. This is the frustrating part.

The Lehigh Valley, once primarily agricultural outside the city limits, has been engulfed by business and light industry, as well as hundreds of housing developments. All of this has contributed to a shortage of places to hunt, but not feeding areas for the geese. For those willing to

follow the birds to the outer areas, there are locations that are open to hunting where the birds either feed or pass over on their flight paths.

It didn't take me long to realize that Canada geese are Canada geese, regardless of where they are located. I began to think about past dove and small game hunting trips where I had noticed geese flying over. I started to piece together parts of the goose hunting puzzle over the years, and it has paid off more than once. There are other factors that have become a part of my early season goose scouting/hunting routine.

Once the season opens I pay constant attention to the weather forecast. I'm particularly concerned about the temperature. It's common during the early fall for the days to be rather warm and the nights to begin getting chilly. One of the things I started noticing during September is the fog that develops on rivers, streams and large ponds early in the morning. This is a result of the difference in air and water temperatures. When the sun comes up, it's common for the fog to get a little thicker and then gradually start to lift. For some reason, which I have yet to discover, the birds seem to fly better when this fog develops. This is what I watch for on the nightly weather forecasts.

When the daylight temperatures help produce this fog in the stream bottoms and on valley ponds, find yourself a good spot in the general area that is on a hill well above the fog. The geese seem to fly the valleys for a short time, but then they begin to move to a higher altitude. Perhaps they feel insecure in the fog, where they can't see potential predators or obstacles.

Obviously, it's important to have a spread of decoys out in a freshly cut hayfield where geese either have been feeding or will fly over on their way to a feeding area that may not be open to hunting. I've discovered that it's fairly

easy to bring geese either right down into the decoys, or at least in close enough for effective shooting.

Those just getting started in goose hunting might be glad to know that for the early season, the huge spread of decoys often needed during the late season isn't necessary in September. In the first half of the early season, I've used as few as a dozen shell decoys with good success. This is primarily because the geese aren't quite as decoy wise as they are later on, and at this time of the year they are still traveling in somewhat smaller, family size flocks of anywhere from five or six to about 15 or so birds. Smaller numbers are easier to pull into a spread of decoys — even a small spread.

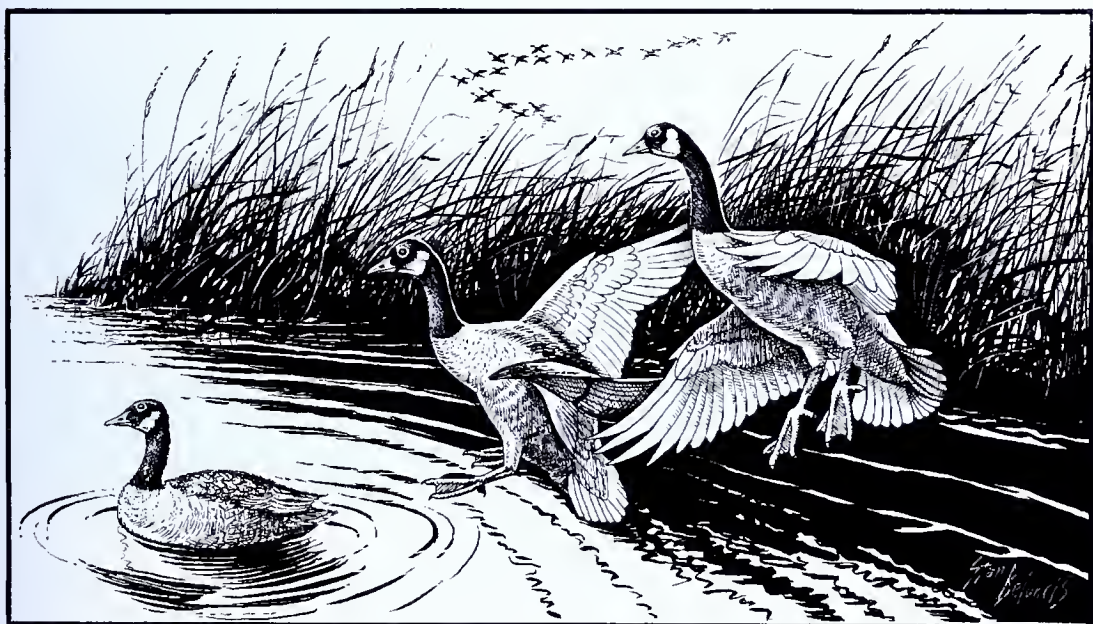
When the weather conditions are right — fog in the valleys — it really doesn't matter if it's going to be a "bluebird" day — the nemesis of duck hunters and late season goose hunters. Once you have your location selected and a spread of decoys out, you can start calling. You don't have to wait until you see or hear geese. If you know they are in the area, start calling, they might come in. This is another part of the game that is

misunderstood by beginning hunters.

There must be a million goose calls on the market today. Every known call manufacturer, and even some "unknowns," have several models on the shelves of local sporting goods stores. Don't go overboard in buying a lot of calls. Like most things, moderation will usually suffice.

My initial forays into the realm of turkey hunting had me believing that only the champion callers could bring in turkeys on a consistent basis. Early on I was afraid to call much or very loud. But as a novice outdoor writer 30 years ago, I had the opportunity to meet some of the most successful turkey hunters who not only entered and won contests, but also got into manufacturing calls. Nearly to a man, and one woman, they all revealed an inner circle secret: In calling turkeys, it's easy to make a mistake, but unless it's a real blooper, the turkeys are often forgiving.

This was brought home to me early one spring morning on SGL 119 in Luzerne County, when I heard what I thought was another hunter doing a very bad imitation of a gobbler. It sounded





like someone had a chokehold on a bird's neck. What a shock when a jake walked within 40 yards of me and made a few more inept gobbles. He didn't come close enough for a shot, but it was a lesson I've retained over the years. Even real birds don't make perfect calls every time.

The same is true of goose calling. Buy a decent call, preferably from a manufacturer who has been in business for a while. You don't have to spend a fortune, but don't buy the cheapest, either. Over the years I've had more than a dozen calls, but have ended up using only two or three at most. Various calls have slightly different pitches — just like the difference young and old birds exhibit in their vocals.

Spend the time learning to make the

basic calls, such as the greeting call, the come back call and the feeding gabble. A good instruction audiotape is a big help in learning what the calls sound like. You can play it in your vehicle while driving to and from work (or when out scouting) and then try to imitate the calls.

If you have access to flocks of geese, spend time listening to them talk to each other. You can even practice talking to them. Sometimes their reactions are comical. (And so are those of other, nonhunters in the park.) The more you hunt, the better you'll become at calling.

Most serious goose hunters I know who hunt over decoys use a 12-gauge magnum with 3- or 3½-inch shells stuffed with BBs, 1s or 2s in steel, bismuth or tungsten shot.

I usually use a Remington Model 1100 12-gauge magnum with a Remchoke tube designated "full with steel shot" installed and 3-inch shells with No. 1 shot. However, last year I used a New England Firearms 10-gauge single-shot with a modified choke 32-inch barrel. I tested it on paper before settling on a BB load for hunting over decoys. It provides plenty of "thunder on the hill."

If you want to try hunting geese during the early season, start thinking about where you've seen birds flying on past hunts during dove season. Do your scouting to find a high spot above a stream or riverbed, then start watching the weather forecasts, because fog in the valleys means thunder on the hill. □

Elk Habitat Benefits Other Wildlife, Too

By Rawland D. Cogan

PGC Wildlife Biologist

HABITAT for elk has four basic components: food, cover, water and space. The social behavior of elk determines how each habitat component is used. To enhance habitat for elk, managers must understand the relationship between elk behavior and habitat, and how manipulating habitat affects elk and other wildlife. These relationships become important because they determine how well biologists and managers are able to create, maintain and enhance habitat elements that elk require for survival.

Since 1982, to better understand when and why elk use various types of habitat, we've used radio-telemetry to monitor the movements of 170 different elk. We've learned that habitat use varies based on topography, vegetation type, aspect and slope, along with time of day and season of the year. These factors are compounded

by sex, age, herding instinct and learned (past) experiences. More specifically we've learned that elk use larger (8- to 20-acre) openings more often than smaller (less than 8 acres) ones, and that if we developed several openings totaling 40 to 60 acres within a 5mi² area (referred to as complexes) that elk would live there most of the year traveling from one of those openings to another, in this complex. This is one of the ways we've reduced elk movements to agricultural areas.

We've also learned that elk and deer co-exist well in Pennsylvania; they have for thousands of years, except between 1877 and 1913, when elk were reported to be exterminated from the Keystone State. Arkansas, Michigan, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Tennessee, North Carolina and Minnesota man-



HABITAT MANAGEMENT for elk includes creating or enhancing large open areas. During the summer, it's common to find large flocks of turkeys feeding in the openings. Wildlife openings provide forage for insects such as grasshoppers and crickets, which turkey poult feed on heavily during the summer.

age both white-tailed deer and elk herds. Biologists in these states have reported, as we observed in Pennsylvania, that if herds are managed properly, competition between elk and deer is minimal to non-existent.

Elk Behavior

The day in the life of an elk — like deer and most other diurnal ruminants — starts with an active period of feeding just prior to first light. Elk feed heavily to fill their paunch (rumen). Able to consume up to 15 pounds of food per day, elk may feed up to three hours each morning. After feeding, the herd most often moves into nearby cover with good visibility to bed down. There the elk begin to ruminate consumed forage, the process of regurgitating forage from the rumen and chewing their cud, which may take several hours. Feeding resumes in late afternoon or evening, generally one to three hours before sunset.

Preferred Food

Grazing animals, elk prefer to eat grasses, legumes, sedges, forbs, leaves and other herbaceous forage. We believe that elk (and deer) prefer high quality legumes such as ladino, alsike, white dutch and red clovers, as well as bird's-foot trefoil. Orchard grass and timothy are preferred cool season grasses. Clover grows best when soil temperatures are generally warm, while timothy and orchard grass prefer cooler soils.

During spring green-up, cool season grasses grow well. As spring turns to summer, legumes begin to grow best and are used heavily by elk and deer. As summer gives way to fall and winter, cool season grasses become more palatable and are, again, used heavily by elk and deer.

We have seen elk paw through 15 to 20 inches of snow to feed on or-

chard grass and timothy. If forage is available and snow conditions are suitable, elk will graze throughout the year. By planting clover and cool season grass, we are able to maintain high quality forage throughout most of the year.

When snow is deep or crusted, elk will browse young stands of aspen, red maple, striped maple, ironwood, witch hazel and junberry. For this reason, both the Game Commission and DCNR's Bureau of Forestry manage timber sales in the elk range to provide winter food for elk and deer. In the short-term, elk and deer browse the tops of the down trees. Another major plus is that grouse, snowshoes, rabbits, bears, bobcats, mice, snakes, foxes, coyotes, and songbirds such as towhees, thrushes, and many warblers all benefit from the regenerating forest.

Habitat Management Plan

Our elk habitat management objective is to develop and maintain optimal habitat on public land and strategically located private land that provide all the life requisites for elk. Again, this is the best way to minimize conflicts on private land. We've learned that for optimal elk habitat, at least 5 to 10 percent of the cover type should be in wildlife openings. Therefore, special emphasis is given to managing existing openings and creating new ones. Pennsylvania's elk range covers approximately 835mi², of which more than two-thirds is public land. The vast majority of the openings planted for elk and other wildlife are located on portions of the Elk, Moshannon and Sproul state forests and on state game lands.

PGC land managers and Bureau of Forestry (BOF) personnel cooperate in the creation and maintenance of the wildlife openings on public lands. Many of these have been created on sites from which the timber had been cut back in the 1970s and '80s, but did not regenerate because of overbrowsing by deer. Utility rights-of-ways represent other openings for elk and other

wildlife, and they're also valuable travel corridors for the animals.

PGC Food and Cover Corp and BOF employees use large dozers, disks, farm tractors and plows to prepare sites for planting. Based on soil samples, each field is top-dressed with lime and fertilizer to maintain quality forage. Once established, most of these wildlife openings are mowed annually, to promote the growth of the legumes and other succulent growth elk — and deer — prefer.

Mowing also helps to maintain desirable plant species by broadcasting seed of desired forage and retard growth of undesirable ones.

Conservation Groups Partner with State Agencies

The success of our elk management program is largely due to the many conservation groups that have been working with us for many years. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International, National Wild Turkey Federation, Pennsylvania Wildlife Habitat Unlimited, Sinnemahoning Sportsman's Club, Mosquito Creek Sportsman's Club, Dominion, Inc. and McDowell Intermediate School (Erie County), have all funded habitat projects here.

These conservation groups understand the benefits provided by habitat enhancement projects; they know that improving habitat for elk benefits other wildlife, too.

Many of our wildlife openings are not visible from roads. They're in remote areas that are accessible only by walking in. If you visit one of these, spend an evening observing wildlife. Throughout the elk range, deer and turkeys use the openings more than elk. Many times I've seen up to 40 deer feeding in the fields. During the summer, it's common to find large flocks



PENNSYLVANIA'S elk range covers approximately 835mi², of which more than two-thirds is public land. The vast majority of the openings planted for elk and other wildlife are located on portions of the Elk, Moshannon and Sprout state forests and on state game lands.

of turkeys feeding in the openings. Wildlife openings provide forage for insects such as grasshoppers and crickets, which turkey poult feed on heavily during the summer. Be patient and observant and you may see a fox or coyote mousing, or a red-tailed hawk hunting nearby.

Some openings, especially those on steep slopes, are not mowed every year. These tall grasses attract grassland birds such as bobolinks. Cottontail rabbits are common in portions of the elk range, too.

Creating and maintaining openings for wildlife adds diversity to our public lands. Resource agency biologists and managers most often design management programs based on the community or ecosystem approach. With an ecosystem/community management program, predators and prey, elk and deer, game and nongame, all their life requisites are considered, including man.

There's plenty of interest in Pennsylvania's growing elk population. Elk are a high profile species that attract interest as well as considerable funding, and it's a tremendous side-benefit that all this interest has helped many other wild animals as well. □

IDENTICAL TWINS, Paul and Glen, sit on the shaded steps of The Octagon. It's their 18th birthday, and they are debating which course of study to pursue at college. Both are equally passionate about history and astronomy, but don't want to follow the same path through life.



THE OCTAGON

Penn's Woods Sketchbook/Bob Sopchick

"So what'll it be, Glen asks, "the past or the future, history or the stars?"

"Why don't we toss a coin?" Paul says.

Glen produces a nickel. "Call it," he says, flipping it high into the air.

"Heads," says Paul, intercepting the coin out of the air, slapping it down on the back of his hand. "It's tails. You choose."

"History," says Glen, looking out over the fields like Longstreet at Gettysburg. "I'll take history."

Paul looks up at the fiery summer sky. "Then I'll reach for the stars."

AFTER SHAKING HANDS with the last board member filing from the conference room, Paul turns off the lights and sits in the dark. The meeting had been a formality, a farewell upon his retirement from the board here in Pittsburgh, similar to another he had made at a different corporation in Seattle the previous day.

The full moon glints off the long polished table and the Monongahela River far below. He contemplates the familiar lunar face that he had studied for so long. Paul had become an astrophysicist and was instrumental in the Apollo missions when he was with NASA, and later, in the private sector, when he became a figurehead in the aerospace industry. Now at 68, he looked forward to new endeavors. He unfolds a note from his brother Glen, and reads it again by moonlight:

3 August 1988

Dear Brother,

Meet me at The Octagon on our birthday. Lots of work to be done.

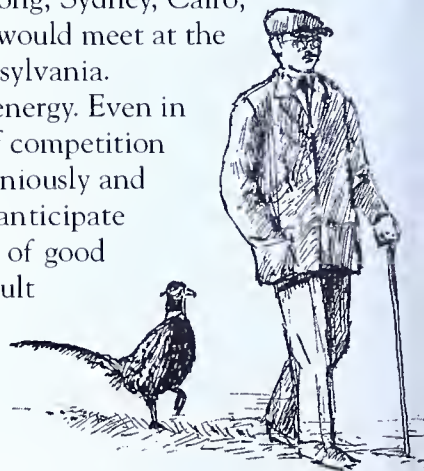
Be prepared to rough it.

— Glen

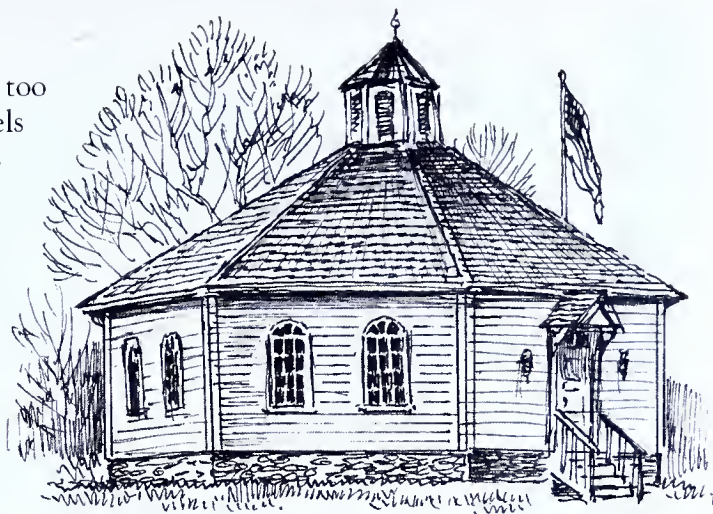
As Paul was bidding farewell to his fellow board members, Glen, a Lincoln scholar and author, was cleaning out his office, having concluded his tenure as an esteemed professor.

They always met annually, to celebrate their birthday by vacationing together in cities across the globe: Reykjavik, Hong Kong, Sydney, Cairo, Valparaiso, Istanbul. But this year was special, as they would meet at the 800-acre homestead deep in the hills of western Pennsylvania.

The twins were men of good humor and boundless energy. Even in their youth there had never been the slightest hint of competition or rivalry between them. They worked together harmoniously and meticulously, with little conversation, each able to anticipate the other's thoughts and actions. Both were marvels of good health, wiry and exuberant, and even now were difficult to tell apart except when they spoke, Glen having acquired the faint drawl of a true Virginia gentleman.



Confirmed bachelors, they were too immersed in their work and travels for any sort of family life. It was the project, the study, and the research that inspired them. Throughout their careers each continued to pursue the other's primary interest as a hobby. Paul was a devoted student of the Civil War, while Glen became a fine amateur astronomer. Now, just as they had planned, they would pick up where they left off, back at The Octagon, with new projects more suited to aging scholars.



FIVE DAYS LATER Paul turned off the highway onto a rutted lane that cut up over the mountain. He parked his new pickup next to Glen's, noting that the trucks were the same make and model, both in basic black. But that didn't surprise him; years earlier each had purchased a black Labrador retriever without the other's knowledge.

While Glen was running a chainsaw inside The Octagon, Paul walked around the building's perimeter and saw that a large trunk from an oak had fallen through the roof. Paul waited for his brother to finish so as not to startle him.

After finishing the cut, Glen turned and said, "This must have happened recently, because there isn't any water damage. But at least we have a head start on wood for the winter."

As always, there wasn't any greeting or small talk, just that mutual eagerness to get into a project. No need to express what the other already knew and felt.

"Here's a list of supplies. See if there's anything you want to add. I've got a truck load of tools. I told the contractor that we'd do all the finish work. We'll meet with him tomorrow morning, and then take a look around the property. We can do some shopping in town afterwards."

Paul examined the list carefully and jotted down a few more things. "You're right, the place needs work, but we have the time now, don't we, professor?"

"That's professor emeritus; I'm retired now," said Glen. After moving the log sections outside, they built a fire at the edge of the field and unrolled their sleeping bags. Work done for the day, they bid each other happy birthday. It was a special day numerically for them, 8-8-88. Eight was their totem number, their lucky number, ever since they were kids. Staring into the flames under a river of stars, they reminisced about The Octagon and their childhood far into the night.

The Octagon was an unusual building with an odd history. Their father, William Travers, was a creative, if not somewhat eccentric Englishman who married the daughter of the wealthy Pittsburgh industrialist Charles Edward Wilson III. For all his intelligence, though, their gregarious father never stayed long at any of the kindly appointed management positions offered by Wilson. Finally, in desperation, their grandfather sent the family to reside on a lovely mountain farm far from the city where his son-in-law could oversee a small timber and mining operation, and avoid distraction. This suited Travers just fine, for the operation demanded little of him, and he devoted all his energies to other projects.



During the warmer months Travers held monthly picnics for the 16 resident families scattered through the uplands. The loggers and miners were good people, with kind hearts and large families. At an April picnic, Travers proposed they build a one-room schoolhouse that would also serve as a community center. At the suggestion of his twin sons it was in the shape of a large octagon. Travers modeled it after the “ink bottle” schoolhouses of the early 19th century, but on a grander scale. He had devised a clever construction plan, and presented detailed architectural drawings that he had made himself.

The men who were familiar with timber and frame construction pronounced the plan sound and everyone was excited. The company would supply all the building materials and land, and the men would be paid for their labor. Their mother, Claire, would be the teacher, having previously taught in the city.

It was a glorious sight, that summer of 1928, watching the schoolhouse rise among the oaks. Travers was always on site, managing details as entire families came to work. By August the school was complete, down to the last eraser. At the dedication a proud Wilson provided the finishing touch, a bell cast in his foundry. After it was placed in the belfry, the twins got to ring it first, as it was also their eighth birthday. Even though it was dedicated as Wilson Elementary School by the board of education, everyone called it The Octagon.

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, after meeting with the general contractor, they drove around the property, then walked an overgrown lane that skirted the fields and continued on as a path far into an oak flat. They bounced rabbits at every turn and watched a flock of turkeys catching grasshoppers at the edge of a field. Squirrels scampered in the oaks, and deer were everywhere, their numerous trails crisscrossing the wild meadows like hastily done stitching.

In the old orchard they flushed several grouse and saw bear sign. The farmhouse, barn and outbuildings had been lost in a fire years ago, and all that remained were vine-covered foundations. They put out an enormous buck from a copse of black willows near the springhouse.

“Are you thinking what I’m thinking?” Glen asked. “I still have our guns in storage. All we need are licenses. There was never game like this when we were kids.”

FOR THE NEXT TWO months they worked tirelessly along with a steady stream of contractors. The Octagon was fitted with a new shake roof, copper rain gutters and cedar siding. They restored the broad plank floor and re-pointed the fieldstone foundation while the contractor built a small kitchen, bath and bedroom loft. New windows, utilities, some paint and a truckload of furniture completed the project. The twins built an octagonal observation platform in the field for stargazing. Glen had salvaged the bell years ago, and once again that sweet peal could be heard through the uplands.

The twins returned a week later with supplies and hunting gear. Glen brought along a handsome matched pair of W. & C. Scott English shotguns that had belonged to their father, and their Model 71 .348 Winchesters that were graduation gifts from their grandfather.

While cleaning the guns they recalled how their father didn't care for "American rough shooting" and once hosted a continental shoot on the farm for some of his father-in-law's associates. He attempted to recreate an English-style shoot where the birds were released several at a time from a hilltop, with gunners waiting at stations below for the high-flying birds. The twins were in charge of releasing their 75 fat, pen-raised pheasants, but not a single bird flew over the gunners. The few that flushed went left or right into the adjacent woods, but most flapped a few yards then walked about. Not a single round was fired, much to the chagrin of his father and embarrassment of Wilson.

For weeks after, pheasants were everywhere, roosting on fence posts, pecking in the farmyard, standing in the lanes. They offered no sport, refusing to fly. What didn't become fox fare ended up on the dinner table in every conceivable pheasant dish known. The ultimate insult was one cockbird that followed their father about like a dog. He threatened to shoot the bird, but their mother protested and it became a family pet, often roosting on the porch rail while his father dozed in his hickory rocker.

"I've got something for you," said Glen. "I wanted to wait until the place was finished."

Paul opened the package and saw that it was a framed sketch of a frenzied battle scene at Seminary Ridge, drawn on location while it happened by Andrew Waud, a Civil War artist.

"It's beyond words. And I have a gift for you, too."

He handed Glen a Lucite disc with a tiny pebble inside.

"This isn't what I think it is, is it?" he asked. Paul nodded.

"But moon rocks are priceless. We brought back 842 pounds of them and every grain is accounted for."

"It's Russian. It was presented to me as a gift when we worked on a joint project."

In the weeks that followed, the brothers hunted almost every day. When deer season rolled around they invited friends to enjoy a weeklong hunt at The Octagon. As teens, the twins' still-hunting prowess was uncanny. When they laced through thick cover after a buck, it was as if a hunter of single mind had the ability to be at two places at once pursuing the deer. This skill hadn't diminished, and the other hunters at The Octagon were amazed when two shots rang out late in the day, and saw the twins each dragging an 8-point buck.

And so it went in those golden autumns that followed. Glorious days of hunting and stargazing and debating the strategies of hallowed generals.

THEY MEET at The Octagon on their 80th birthday, August 8, 2000. After some chores, they sit on the observation deck, waiting for the Perseid meteor showers to begin.

"Well, we made it, Paul," said Glen. Eight decades. Our lucky number. Do you think we can make 88? That would really be something."

"No," said Paul. You might, but I won't. I'm not well. I don't have long now."

For a long while the octogenarians watch in silence as hundreds of meteors flash and die over the uplands.

Paul finally speaks. "Glen, I thought I'd never tell you this, but when I caught that coin, it came up heads. You lost. I just wanted you to have the choice."

Glen smiled. "Well, I knew that I lost the toss. I could see it in your face. Our face. What I never told you was that I wanted to be the one to reach for the stars. But from here, tonight, it seems that if you wait long enough, the stars will come to you."



FIELD NOTES



What's the Buzz?

Food & Cover Corps worker Jay Sporer checked a wood duck box on Prompton Pond that was crammed full of live bees and honey. When he tapped on the side of the box the bees started buzzing.

— LMO JOHN C. SHUTKUSKI, DAMASCUS

Encircled

Local rural mail carrier Sherri Wiand noticed some cows in a pasture that were all in a circle facing inward with their heads down. Upon closer examination, she spotted a groundhog in the center of the circle. Every time the chuck would try to run, the cows would nose it back into the circle. After watching for a few minutes, Sherri felt sorry for the groundhog, so she began blowing her horn, which caused the cows to scatter, giving the woodchuck a chance to scramble into its hole.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Notable Event

TRAINING SCHOOL — While on a field trip one day we witnessed elements from dendrology and bird ID classes, and firearms training. While identifying a beech tree, a Baltimore oriole took off from a branch and scored a perfect "hit" on Trainee DeCoskey.

— TRAINEE RICHARD W. JOYCE, HARRISBURG

Houdini Act

PERRY — The people whose property I trapped a nuisance bear on said the bruin kept them awake most of the night by creating quite a ruckus in the culvert trap. When I arrived the following morning, however, the bear was gone. It had used its front claws like a can opener to peel back the heavy corrugated metal of the trap floor then squeezed through the small opening it had created.

— WCO WILLIAM M. WILLIAMS, MILLERSTOWN

Immediate Results

LYCOMING — I constructed a bluebird nesting box near my residence last spring, despite not noticing any bluebirds around. Within two days, however, a pair of bluebirds claimed the structure.

— WCO RICHARD E. MACKLEM, JERSEY SHORE

It Figures

MONROE — I was patrolling on the last day of spring turkey season when I noticed 10 mature gobblers, and nearly all were on public land.

— WCO MARK RUTKOWSKI, SWIFTWATER



Leaves of Three . . .

TRAINING SCHOOL — Trainee Kris Krebs and I were brushing up on our tree and shrub identification by visual as well as by feeling characteristics, and all was going well until I couldn't stop Kris in time from squeezing and rubbing poison ivy leaves.

— TRAINEE GERALD L. KAPRAL, HARRISBURG

Stop and Smell the Roses

UNION — My wife Marge watched the squirrels in our yard not just smell her red peonies, but actually try to pick them.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

He Who Laughs Last . . .

As my wife, Tara Dawn, slowed to turn into our driveway she saw a hawk crash into a nearby steep bank. Concerned for the hawk's safety, she stopped the truck, but as the hawk sprang up to resume its flight, it was so startled by my wife's presence that it dropped the black snake it had just captured onto the hood of our truck. I tried, in between my uncontrollable laughter, to tell Tara Dawn this was just a chance encounter, but somehow I didn't think I was too convincing.

— MICHAEL A. DUBAICH, CHIEF, SPECIAL OPERATIONS DIVISION, HARRISBURG

Aerial Show

CLINTON — For the last stop on a game lands tour for the executive office staff, WCO Terry Wills had some spotting scopes set up and focused in on a bald eagle nest along Pine Creek. After an hour without spotting any eagles, however, we become apprehensive, as we sure hoped we could end our visitors' tour with a majestic bald eagle soaring over the pristine valley. As if on cue, that's exactly what happened just moments after the entourage arrived. Now, if I can only get Terry to tell me how he managed it.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

Close, But Not Quite

TRAINING SCHOOL — Due to a misidentified elk skull, the giraffe has become the 66th mammal to inhabit Pennsylvania.

— TRAINEE TIMOTHY L. WENRICH, HARRISBURG

Sign 'Em Up

MONROE — Rick Keiper, who has been contracted by us to pick up roadkilled deer, has been doing a great job keeping the roads clear, picking up more than 1,000 since last year, but Pike County seems to have a better system. While driving on I-84 between Milford and Matamoras, I watched a bald eagle swoop down on the median and fly off with part of a roadkilled deer.

— DEPUTY BILL MCGLOONE, LONG POND



Nah, That Little Bitty Bird

BRADFORD — Over the years I've witnessed Deputy Charlie Fox handle plenty of critters, including bears, beavers, bobcats, turkeys, skunks, coyotes and foxes. Last spring, however, he met his match. We spotted a grouse sitting along the road, so I told Charlie to get out and chase it away so it wouldn't wander onto the road. As Charlie approached the grouse, though, it flew up at him, causing him to duck. He finally chased it about 10 yards off the road, but then he came scrambling back to the vehicle with the grouse in hot pursuit. We figured the bird must have had young nearby.

— WCO WILLIAM BOWER, TROY

Big Project

ALLEGHENY — I received a phone call from an outdoor advertising company about a pair of hawks that had built a nest on the catwalk of one of their billboard signs that was due to be changed. Raising two chicks, the redtails were in no mood to cooperate, so I decided to relocate the nest to a nearby railroad trestle. With permission from the railroad, and with a large crane and a 2-man crew from the advertising company, we were able to move the nest without too much difficulty. The hawks successfully fledged the two chicks, and now I just hope they liked the new location enough to use it next spring.

— WCO GARY M. FUJAK, CORAOPOLIS

Misinformed

BERKS — A spring turkey hunter told me that black flies had cost him a gobbler. He said that they were so bad he had to apply bug spray and that the gobbler he had coming in smelled it and spooked. I didn't have the heart to tell him that turkeys can't smell.

— WCO CHUCK LINCOLN, LEESPORT



Full Schedule

LEHIGH — People often ask what we do during our "down time" in the summer. Well, here's what I did on one day in June: I responded to a deer hanging from a basketball hoop at a residence; a bear running around Hellertown, which we never caught; I picked up two sick baby raccoons handled by a person; responded to a call about two deer running down 13th street in Allentown; dropped off the raccoons at the Department of Health animal laboratory to have them tested; and then, at 4 a.m., I responded to a call that the bear was back, this time in Bethlehem.

— WCO MICHAEL BEAHM, FOGELSVILLE

Left in the Dust

On a 5-mile stretch of road in Forest County I counted seven roadkilled porcupines. Through evolution the porcupine has developed a coat of quills, instead of speed, to defend itself against predators. Unfortunately, the porcupine and evolution move slowly and cars move too fast.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE

Good Idea

PERRY — HTE instructors at the Ickesburg Sportsmens Club devote four Saturdays to teaching each year and receive nothing in return except the satisfaction in knowing they instruct new hunters and trappers about safety and ethics. At the last class last year, however, sisters Priscilla and Rebekah Sangrey gave a thank-you card to the instructors addressed, "To all the wonderful instructors." That card meant more to the instructors than anything I could have said to them.

— WCO JIM BROWN, LOYSVILLE

Leave Them Be

TIOGA — An 11-year-old boy from Middlebury Township and his father were driving up the dead end road they live on when they noticed a black bear lying along the road. Not knowing if it was sick, injured or asleep, the boy got out of the vehicle and touched the bear, which spun around and bit the young man on the hand and then ran off. The bite wasn't serious, but the boy had to go through a series of painful rabies shots.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE,
MIDDLEBURY CENTER

Speedy Worker

FOREST — I spotted a vehicle parked along a little used logging road during gobbler season, and noticed that a robin had constructed a nest on top of one of the rear tires. This made me wonder if the truck had been abandoned, but just then the owner walked out of the woods. I asked the hunter how long he had been parked in the spot and was surprised to hear less than four hours.

— WCO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

That's Cheatin'

TRAINING SCHOOL — During bird identification class instructor LMO Scott Bills was having trouble remembering the song of the Canadian warbler, until several trainees started singing "Oh Canada."

— TRAINEE JOHN PAPSON, HARRISBURG



True Love

ALLEGHENY — At a gathering for my deputies and their wives, my wife got a better understanding of the dedication that deputies and their families have for the Game Commission. My wife also was surprised to learn that many of the deputies' wives accompany their husbands to pick up roadkilled deer.

— WCO DANIEL T. SITLER, OAKMONT

Rodeo Cat

FULTON — Brian Riley of Curryville was archery hunting last fall when he noticed a red fox coming towards his treestand. Brian couldn't believe his eyes when a house cat he didn't even know was around, pounced on the fox. When last seen, the feline was taking a ride down through the woods, clinging to the back of the streaking fox.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Off Course

During the spring gobbler season I noticed a hen wood duck flying from one tree to the next. I figured she must have been looking for den holes, and then she flew to a nearby tree and disappeared into a hole. Soon, two gray squirrels scrambled out of the hole, and after a few moments, she, too, came out and flew off down the mountain. I've always known that wood ducks sometimes nest quite a ways from water, but this hen had been a mile from the nearest water source.

— GARY GLICK, FIELD FORESTER, LAKE ARIEL

Nice Gesture

BEDFORD — After reading my Field Note in the May issue about my flat tire, the Bedford Sportsmen's Club presented me with a can of "Fix-a-Flat" at their monthly meeting. Those guys have never seen my flats, though, because what I do to a tire Jeff Gordon's pit crew couldn't fix.

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

That'll Teach Ya

TRAINING SCHOOL — My wife and I were hiking when we came upon a deer skull, and as I tried to impress her by pointing out the identification characteristics when a wasp flew out of an eye socket and landed on my wrist. My wife impressed me with her nursing skills.

— TRAINEE GLEN CAMPBELL, HARRISBURG

Way to Go

WARREN — Congratulations to the Tidioute School Envirothon teams and their coach, Mr. Kerr, for capturing first place honors with the highest overall combined school score during the 2001 Warren County Envirothon.

— WCO DUSTIN M. STONER, TIDIOUTE



Bad Luck

SNYDER — I've been trying to trap a nuisance bear, but so far all I've caught is an opossum that ate 11 doughnuts in one night, and my neighboring WCO who got locked behind a gate on a state forest road while I was checking the trap.

— WCO HAROLD J. MALEHORN, MIDDLEBURG

Got the Last Laugh

ADAMS — Sally Claypool and Stacy Reed caught a nuisance squirrel in a box trap and were taking it out of town to release it when they heard a ruckus and noticed the squirrel tumble out of the trap door. The bushytail, with the big door hinge screw in its mouth, stopped and looked at them, seemingly with a twinkle in its eye, before heading back to its nest.

— WCO LARRY D. HAYNES, GETTYSBURG



Roadrunner Cartoon

WYOMING — Jerry Evans had two fine gobblers strutting toward him when, suddenly, a coyote charged in and snatched his turkey decoy. The two gobblers took off and the beguiled coyote slunk somberly into the shadows.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Safety First

BRADFORD — On the last day of turkey season, WCO Vernon Perry and I were checking hunters on SGL 12 when we came across three individuals who were not displaying any orange clothing while moving. Before giving them citations, I stressed the importance of wearing orange and why it was for their own good. Thirty minutes later I received a call about a turkey hunting related shooting incident: The victim had not been wearing any orange while moving.

— WCO MATTHEW GREBECK, EAST SMITHFIELD

Hats Off, John and Brad!

As we prepare for our annual first aid and CPR training, I was reminded of how valuable this training can be. Last summer, wildlife maintenance propagators Brian J. Hibell Jr. and Brad Stine returned to the southwest game farm maintenance shop and found game farm worker Darl Kunselman slumped over, in a cold sweat with pain in his chest and arm. Quick to recognize the symptoms of a heart attack, they immediately called for an ambulance, then calmed Darl while waiting for it to arrive. According to the doctors, their quick action probably saved Darl's life. Without this training, our employees may not have diagnosed Darl's heart attack, especially because Darl is in his early 30s and had been a picture of health.

— JAMES N. DOMIRE, ASST. SUPERINTENDENT, SOUTHWEST GAME FARM

Out of Moth Balls

INDIANA — Doug Etter of Mountain Dreams International recently provided tree climbing safety training to several officers in the Southwest Region, which will come in handy for removing bears from trees and checking on the nesting birds such as ospreys and eagles. Retired LMO Dennis Jones, who has been climbing trees for years, brought his equipment to the training session. I knew Dennis had been with the Game Commission for many years, but I didn't realize just how long until he and Doug began to sort through Dennis's equipment. After getting it spread out, Doug commented, "Wow, the only other place I've ever seen some of this stuff was in a museum."

— WCO PATRICK L. SNICKLES, MARION CENTER

Who Says So?

CHESTER — Many people tell me that there's a shortage of deer here, but recently, in one day I picked up five roadkills, responded to a call about a deer that had entered the service bay at a garage, and a deer wandering around in a post office parking lot.

— WCO KEITH W. MULLIN, OXFORD

Deer hunter survey approved

TO CONTINUE to improve our deer management program, the Board of Game Commissioners at its June meeting approved a proposal for Pennsylvania State University to conduct a survey of Pennsylvania deer hunters.

"This survey will allow us to gain further insight into Pennsylvania deer hunters and establish an understanding of deer hunter perceptions and characteristics," said Dr. Gary Alt, Deer Management Section supervisor. "We hope to use results from this survey for staff recommendations for 2002-03 deer seasons and bag limits, and for public education and outreach efforts."

Dr. James Finley and Dr. A.E. Luloff of Penn State are designing a survey to explore relationships be-

tween hunter success — as defined by consistently harvesting deer — and time spent hunting and/or scouting; characteristics of a hunter's primary hunting area, such as private vs. public lands, distance from home or whether they hunt the same area every year; and hunting techniques, such as driving, standing or stalking. The survey also will investigate why hunters often do not submit a deer harvest report card, and evaluate hunters' attitudes concerning antler restrictions.

For the survey, the Game Commission will provide to Penn State the names, addresses and telephone numbers for 2,000 Pennsylvania hunters and photocopies of 800 report cards from successful deer hunters from the 2000-01 season. All information provided will be kept confidential.

Home-study hunter education course being developed

THE Commissioners agreed to grant \$13,500 to the International Hunter Education Association to develop and implement an international home-study hunter education program. The project, which will begin in August and last about two years, aims to establish home-study hunter education opportunities on the Internet.

This new approach is not going to replace ongoing hunter education classes, which the Game Commission has been providing since the late 1950s. Rather, it will serve as a means

for students to reduce classroom time. But there are other attractive possibilities.

"If students learn the basics via the Internet and come to the classroom with a better grasp of what we're teaching, that paves the way for our hunter education program to dedicate more time to shooting and other hands-on and interactive exercises," noted Keith Snyder, PGC Hunter-Trapper Education Division chief. "This new approach permits students to learn in the comforts of their home

and eliminates scheduling and transportation complications that frequently impact a student's ability to reach a class."

Hunter education home-study is part of a new foundation being developed for the Game Commission's Hunter-Trapper Education program. In a plan developed to advance the agency's program over the next five years, emphasis is being placed on home-study to reduce the current 10-hour course to eight hours, with increased focus on hands-on, skill-based learning objectives.

"Home-study hunter education offers numerous opportunities to improve hunter recruitment and enhance student learning," explained Vern Ross, PGC executive director. "Investing in this project is truly the right thing to do, especially when you consider that more than half of Pennsylvanians have Internet access at home.

In other action, the board:

- Approved providing \$2,000 to the Cooperative North American Shotgun Education Program, to cover research on nontoxic shot ballistics, waterfowl wounding loss reduction and waterfowl hunter recruitment, as well as educational services;

- Approved a regulatory change that permits properly licensed bowhunters, muzzleloader hunters and special firearms season hunters to cooperate with one another or hunt to-

gether when their seasons overlap;

- Suspended the Deer Damage Areas program, because the concurrent antlered and antlerless deer firearms season scheduled for 2001 provides the same advantage this program provided;

- Gave preliminary approval for the Game Commission to authorize, by permit, the sale of tanned, cured or mounted heads or skins of any lawfully taken wildlife. Regulations currently provide a 90-day time restriction that starts after the close of the season in which the animal was taken. The permit would cost \$5 and would be valid for 120 days;

- Gave preliminary approval to limit possession of live foxes taken from the wild for collection of urine to five. A permit is required to pursue this activity;

- Gave preliminary approval to regulatory language that requires hunters participating in the special firearms season to wear 250 square inches of fluorescent orange material on the head, chest and back combined. In addition, regulatory language was changed to limit, during the special firearms season, the use of only 22-caliber rimfires for dispatching trapped furbearers;

- Gave preliminary approval to new regulatory language that clearly defines the application process for and activities of commercial wildlife pest control agents, which are permitted

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

by the Game Commission. This language includes standards for dispatching animals in a humane manner; approved traps and devices; proper disposal of carcasses; unlawful activities; and establishing a testing process for new applicants;

- Gave preliminary approval to establish a bobcat guide permit, which would be used by a person who guides a bobcat trapper, or who assists a bobcat hunter. The permit fee would be \$10 for residents, \$25 for nonresidents;

- Announced that junior hunter license sales have increased for the second consecutive year, going from

98,203 in 1999 to 100,835 in 2000;

- Directed agency staff to investigate the possibility of releasing river otters to their former range in southcentral Pennsylvania;

- Asked staff to prepare a report on the potential problems and benefits of deer hunters using bait in the Commonwealth's urban and suburban areas; and

- Set the next meeting date for Oct. 1-2, at the agency's Harrisburg headquarters. Both meeting dates will begin at 8:30 a.m. Public comments and staff reports will be accepted on Oct. 1. The Board will take up a voting agenda on Oct. 2.

Nearly 3,000 acres acquired

AT THE JUNE meeting, the Commissioners approved several items that will add nearly 3,000 acres to the state game lands system.

A land swap was approved that will result in a net increase of 2,725 acres of state game lands in Washington County. Under the plan, the Game Commission will acquire 4,000 acres in Blain, Donegal, Hopewell and Independence townships, in exchange for 1,275 acres of SGL 117 in Smith and Hanover townships. The plan was initially presented to the Game Commission by state Sen. Barry Stout, state Rep. Victor Lescovitz, the Washington County Commissioners and the Washington County Council on Economic Development.

Allegheny Power Corporation currently owns the 4,000-acre tract the Game Commission will receive. It will be added to SGL 232, which currently contains 1,188 acres. The Game Commission also will receive the right of surface support and all rights to the shallow coal seams. Allegheny Power will retain the Pitts-

burgh seam of coal and the oil and gas rights.

Subject only to safety zone regulations, the 1,275-acre portion of SGL 117 being transferred to Washington County will remain open to public hunting and furtaking. The land will eventually be developed as part of a planned industrial park. The Game Commission will retain the oil and gas rights and the deep mine coal rights associated with SGL 117.

"I want to thank the Washington County Sportsmen and Conservation League for its support and assistance in the negotiations of this land exchange," said Game Commissioner Roxane Palone. "We must all think in the long term. Hunters and trappers contribute much to the local economies of rural townships.

"The 4,000 acres of Allegheny Power land is very beneficial wildlife habitat, including Buffalo Creek, a fishable body of water, which runs through it. Ultimately, this land exchange is in the best interests of the wildlife resource and the hunters and

furtakers of Pennsylvania.”

Two other acquisitions will add 228 acres to game lands in Armstrong and Indiana counties. In Armstrong County, a 67-acre railroad grade that is a partial indenture to SGL 287 was purchased from the Pittsburgh & Shawmut Railroad for \$26,800. The parcel is in Madison and Pine townships. In Indiana County, 161 acres was received from Consol Inc., in Center and Brush Valley townships, and will become part of SGL 276.

The Board also approved a lease-land exchange with the Meadowbrook Coal Company of Lykens, Dauphin County, to remove more than 1 million tons of abandoned coal refuse and reclaim portions of SGL 264, Wiconisco Township, Dauphin County.

Nearly 20 percent of the refuse is coal, which Meadowbrook will recover. In exchange for the coal, Meadowbrook will pay the Game Commission an estimated royalty of \$282,550, including a 33-acre parcel

that will become part of SGL 84 in West Cameron Township, Northumberland County.

In addition, Meadowbrook will pay the Game Commission for the merchantable timber on the 72 acres. Meadowbrook will have 20 years to perform its refuse removal and reclamation operations, which will reduce ongoing pollution into the Wiconisco Creek watershed.

As part of the 20-year lease, Meadowbrook has agreed to perform additional reclamation work on SGL 264. This will include areas that currently have limited wildlife habitat or recreational value.

“This mining project is in direct support of Gov. Tom Ridge’s ‘Growing Greener’ and ‘Reclaim PA’ initiatives, and will pave the way for better wildlife habitat and improved recreational opportunities,” said Greg Grabowicz, Bureau of Land Management director. “The primary beneficiaries are the environment, wildlife and Pennsylvanians.”

Antlerless deer/elk license application deadlines

COUNTY TREASURERS will begin accepting antlerless deer license applications through the mail from Pennsylvania residents beginning Monday, August 6. Nonresidents may apply through the mail starting Monday, August 20.

For the first round of applications for “unsold antlerless deer licenses,” county treasurers will begin accepting applications from residents and nonresidents by mail on Monday, August 27. For the second round, applications will be accepted beginning

Monday, September 10. Check the Game Commission’s website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) or watch local news media for county availability of licenses.

Over-the-counter-sales will begin in Special Regulations Area counties on Monday, August 27; in all other counties, where they’re still available, on Monday, November 5.

For elk licenses, the Game Commission has begun accepting applications for 30 licenses to be made available. Applications are available from

"The Outdoor Shop," posted on the agency's website. Applicants may complete and submit the form online. Those who wish to apply by mail may print the application from the website or use the form in the 2001-02 *Pennsylvania Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations*.

A \$10 non-refundable fee must be submitted with the application. Forms submitted through the mail must be accompanied by a check or money

order (do not send cash) made payable to "Pennsylvania Game Commission," and must be received in the Game Commission's post office box by **August 24**. On-line applications must be accompanied by a credit card payment (VISA, MasterCard, Discover and American Express accepted), and must be submitted by **September 14**. No Game Commission office will accept hand-delivered applications.

520 bobcat permits for 2001-02

FOR 2001-02, the Game Commission will issue 520 bobcat permits, which will be selected at a public drawing at the Harrisburg headquarters on September 14.

"Based on the harvest success rate of the 2000-01 season and our survey of unsuccessful bobcat permit holders, we plan to conservatively increase the number of permits allocated in order to move closer to our harvest objective of 175 bobcats," said PGC executive director Vern Ross. "Incremental annual increases over the next two years will ensure against exceeding the harvest objective and will allow for more precise estimation of permit holder success rates."

Last year, the Game Commission awarded 290 permits from an applicant pool of 3,276. During the season, 58 bobcats were taken, for a harvest success rate of 20 percent. After surveying the unsuccessful permit holders, the success rate was adjusted to 22.1 percent, to account for permit holders that did not participate in the season.

According to PGC biologist Dr. Matthew Lovallo, agency staff met just about every successful bobcat hunter and trapper within four days of the reported harvest to examine the

carcass. Carcasses were sexed, weighed and measured (total length and chest girth), and a canine tooth was collected from the lower jaw. Teeth from adults will be used for age determination, and this information will be provided to successful hunters and trappers when it's available.

In addition, stomachs were collected and frozen for diet analyses that will be conducted at Colgate University. Blood samples were collected from most of the animals to test for toxoplasmosis, at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. A kidney and surrounding abdominal fat were collected to assess condition of harvested bobcats, and reproductive tracts were collected from females to assess pregnancy rates and litter sizes.

"Of those awarded permits last year, 12 percent indicated that they did not attempt to harvest a bobcat, and seven percent said that they were interested in obtaining a permit only to include in their collection of hunting and furtaking licenses and memorabilia," Lovallo said. "Another 62 percent indicated that they had hoped to harvest a bobcat while pursuing another species, but did not plan to specifically pursue a bobcat. Of the unsuccessful permit holders, only 27

percent lived within the harvest zone.”

Applications for the 520 bobcat permits, along with a nonrefundable \$5 fee, are being accepted now, and must be postmarked no later than August 17. Mail-in applications are included in the 2001-02 Digest.

Also on July 1, the agency began accepting applications through “The Outdoor Shop” on the agency’s website, www.pgc.state.pa.us. Applicants may charge their hunting/

furtaking licenses, as well as a bobcat application, to their VISA, MasterCard, American Express or Discover credit cards. Online applications will be accepted through midnight, Aug. 17.

The bobcat hunting season is Oct. 13 - Feb. 23; the trapping season, Oct. 14 - Feb. 23. Like last year, bobcats may be taken only in Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3. Those who received a bobcat permit last year are not eligible for this year’s drawing.

DNA evidence key to bear case

ARMED with DNA evidence and witness testimony, WCO Leonard Groshek, McKean County, prosecuted Michael Autry, 27, of Pittsburgh, for killing a bear in a den.

Autry was found guilty on May 17, by District Justice Michael Kennedy of Kane, McKean County, of killing a bear in a den and making false or fraudulent statements at a bear check station in an attempt to cover up the crime. Autry was fined \$1,000 (\$800 for killing a bear in its den and \$200 for the fraudulent statement), and he also may lose his hunting/trapping privileges for up to three years.

Around noon on Nov. 20, the bear season opener, Autry, standing on a large pile of logs, treetops and brush, shot into what was later proven to be a bear den. Accompanied by members of his hunting party, Autry removed the untagged, ungutted 240-pound sow from the area.

A hunter who was 140 yards away quickly reported the incident to other members of his hunting party, which included Eric Simcox, a deputy waterways conservation officer for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Other members of the hunting party recorded vehicle descriptions in

the area. Simcox inspected the brush pile and found it contained an obvious bear den — a nest-like depression lined with wood chips and other vegetation, with logs inside chewed by the bear.

“Thanks to the quick action of the witnesses, said WCO Groshek, “I was able to arrive at the den in just over two hours. After interviewing witnesses and taking photographs, I crawled into the den to collect hair and blood samples.”

Groshek sent the samples to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon. Forensic scientists in the serology department conducted two tests and determined that three samples (the sample collected from the den, a sample collected from the bear and the bear’s premolar collected at the bear check station) all originated from the same bear. This evidence enabled WCO Groshek to link the defendant and his illegally killed bear to the site of the kill.

According to PGC biologist Mark Ternent, who testified as an expert witness at the hearing, pregnant sows tend to den first, and in some years up to one third may be denned by bear

season, and thus are removed from the hunted population.

"The timing of our bear season and the fact that it is unlawful to kill a bear in a den, ensure that a significant percentage of the pregnant sows are protected each year," Terner said.

Autry reported the bear kill at the McKean County check station, as required by law. However, in an attempt to cover his tracks, Autry reported the kill as taking place more than five miles from where it actually occurred.

The hearing in District Justice Kennedy's office, which lasted nearly two hours, included testimony from several bear hunters who witnessed the

violation; Game Commission biologists and check station personnel; and lab results from DNA testing.

"This case demonstrates the importance of hunter involvement," said Vern Ross. "Our WCOs are spread thin, and we must have the support of hunters and the public who witness violations to contact the Game Commission. It also demonstrates that the Game Commission will take advantage of all the new technologies that science makes available to us in protecting Pennsylvania's wildlife."

(At press time it was learned that Autry may be appealing this decision to county court.)

Nearly 50,000 acres of private lands offered for CREP enrollment

NEARLY 50,000 acres have been enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), half-way toward the 100,000-acre goal for what amounts to the state's greatest hope for restoring farmland wildlife habitat in Pennsylvania.

"Pennsylvania's CREP is one of the top programs in the nation," PGC executive director Vern Ross announced. "Not only will this program benefit small game hunting, but it also will go a long way toward improving water quality and reducing soil erosion in the Susquehanna and Potomac river basins. The Pennsylvania CREP represents a major step in the state's efforts to help restore our watersheds and meet Gov. Tom Ridge's upstream commitments to help protect the Chesapeake Bay."

CREP is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The program is focused

on enrolling 100,000 acres of highly-erodible cropland and buffers within 180 feet of a stream in a 20-county region of southcentral and southeastern Pennsylvania for 10-15 years.

USDA began taking offers for enrollment in CREP on June 1, 2000. Program enrollment will remain open until at least Sept. 30, 2002, or until the 100,000-acre cap is reached. So far, more than 1,600 landowners have offered 49,236 acres for enrollment in CREP in the 20-county region.

Landowners interested in participating in CREP are encouraged to contact the habitat biologist assigned to their respective county:

- Brian Wolff (814-445-6876, ext. 130) Bedford, Fulton and Somerset counties;
- Colleen DeLong (570-286-7114, ext. 114) Northumberland and Union counties;
- Dean Shank (717-334-2317, ext. 119) Adams and York counties;

- Sharon Scarborough (717-249-3924, ext. 113) Cumberland and Franklin counties;

- Roger Coup (717-921-2380, ext. 108) Dauphin, Lebanon and Perry counties;

- Scott Singer (570-784-1062, ext. 126) Columbia and Montour counties;

- Kevin Wenner (570-622-1312, ext. 119) Berks and Schuylkill counties;

- Chad Spencer (570-837-0007, ext. 113) Juniata and Snyder counties; and

- Josh Homyack (717-396-9423) Chester and Lancaster counties.

Landowners also may contact the

USDA Service Center in their county, which is listed in the telephone book blue pages.

“With state Rep. Ed Staback and U.S. Congressman Tim Holden championing the legislative effort for CREP, organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, county conservation districts and other state, federal and private agencies all are playing an important role in making CREP a success,” Ross said. “These individuals and groups recognize that improving small game hunting opportunities is key to preserving Pennsylvania’s hunting heritage. They also recognize that improving



The Louie-Beach Advanced Wetland Compensation Project, in Somerset County, has been honored with the Federal Highway Administration 2001 Environmental Excellence Award. This 40-acre wetland, named after two equipment operators involved in the earthwork, took slightly more than three months to build and cost only about \$3,000 an acre. Present at the award ceremony were: RON BEACHY, PennDOT; BILL PACKARD, PA Turnpike Commission; VINCE SCHOMMOLLER, Federal Highway Administration; JOHN SMITH, PGC Federal Aid Supervisor, Southwest Region; BILL SAVAGE, PennDOT; GENE BARRON, New Enterprise Stone & Lime Co.; KEN SMITH, The EADS Group; DAIN DAVIS, PennDOT; and CINDY BURBANK, Federal Highway Administration.

soil conservation, water quality and wildlife habitat are not mutually exclusive, but can be accomplished together for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians."

Funded at \$210 million over the next 10-15 years, CREP is an unprecedented example of federal-state interagency cooperation and how to build partnerships for conservation.

State and non-profit contributions must equal 20 percent of the total program costs. Nearly \$150 million will be new federal funds, with the remaining \$60 million in state and non-profit contributions. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Ducks Unlimited have pledged \$5 million. The Game Commission will expend nearly \$8 million over the next 10-15 years.

Middle Creek Art Show/programs

On Aug. 3, 4 & 5, the Middle Creek Wildlife Art Show will be held. This, the 16th annual Middle Creek Wildlife Art Show, will feature the works of more than 30 of Pennsylvania's finest wildlife artists. The show runs from noon to 8 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 3; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., on Saturday, Aug. 4; and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 5.

On Aug. 22 & 23, at 7:30 p.m., PGC Environmental Education Specialist Bert Myers will present "Restoring Pennsylvania's Wildlife Diversity," a review of bald eagle, peregrine falcon, osprey and other reintroduction projects.

The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon

County.

At Pymatuning on Saturday Aug. 4, noon-3 p.m., watch skilled artisans work at their craft. Scheduled are Daryl Myer, Cambridge Springs, woodburning; John Vanderstappen, Jamestown, decoy carving; and Kristin Williams, Pittsburgh, wildlife artist.

On Saturday Aug. 18, noon-3 p.m., Robert and Maryjane Angelo of Skye's Spirit Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center, will be on hand with presentations and exhibits about wildlife rehabilitation.

Programs are free at Pymatuning and are held at the Wildlife Learning Center located near Linesville, Crawford County.

MEMBERS of the Red Rock Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation donated 10 education kits to the PGC's Northeast Region for use in schools and with other youth groups.

Pictured here are Joe Wentzel, PGC Northeast Region I&E Supervisor; Dave Golubiewski, chapter vice president; George Margitish, senior sponsor; JoAnn Margitish, treasurer; Bill Arnold, member; and Chet Stavish, publicity chairman.



In Memoriam

Richard M. Houser

1935 – 2000

Superintendent, Northcentral
Game Farm
Retired; 26 yrs.

George X. Adams

1915 – 2000

Construction Inspector
Supervisor 1
Bureau of Land Management
Retired; 15 yrs.

Esther M. Gill

1908 – 2000

Clerk-Stenographer 4
Executive Office
Retired; 42 yrs.

Benjamin F.F. Maurer III

1943 – 2001

Semi-Skilled Laborer
Southeast Region
Retired; 26 yrs.

Mary L. Slater

1955 – 2001

Wildlife Maintenance Propagator
Northcentral Game Farm
Died-in-Service; 20 yrs.

George W. Miller

1910 – 2000

Game Conservation Officer 2
Northwest Region
Retired; 31 yrs.

S. Earl Carpenter

1904 – 2000

Game Conservation Officer 2
Northcentral Region
Retired; 39 yrs.

Harold F. Harter

1911 – 2001

Game Conservation Officer 2
Northeast Region
Retired; 37 yrs.

Paul L. Mawhinney

1928 – 2001

Semi-Skilled Laborer
Northwest Region
Retired; 29 yrs.

George E. Gibson

1942 – 2001

Land Manager
Northwest Region
Retired; 18 yrs.

Samuel LaRosa

1935 – 2001

Semi-Skilled Laborer
Southwest Region
Retired; 12 yrs.

Arlene D. Williams

1955 – 2001

Administrative Assistant 1
Bureau of Administrative
Services
Died-in-Service; 26 yrs.

William A. Hodge

1909 – 2001

Game Conservation Officer III, Supervisor
Southcentral Region
Retired; 36 yrs.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Another View

By Linda Steiner

It's a two-sided coin; success, as in bagging your quarry, keeps you interested in hunting. On the other hand, if you get your game all the time, you're likely to become bored.

The Importance of Being Skunked



Linda Steiner

GETTING skunked once in a while when hunting can be a good thing.

THIS PAST spring gobbler season the best turkey hunter I know didn't get a bird. Although he is our hunting group's unofficial "gobbler guru," he finished the season without filling his tag. Yes, he did "play with some birds," as he termed it, talking with them many mornings, calling them close enough to see, even missing them. He also had days when he

couldn't locate a tom, when they gobbled and went the other way, when he inadvertently walked too far, trying to set up to call, and flushed the bird. After hunting every morning he could, he still had his spring gobbler tag attached to his license. In a word, he'd been skunked.

This turkey hunter is enough of a veteran that he mostly shrugged off his non-success. Of course he was disappointed, but he took it in stride. When the other members of our group heard that our top turkey hunter didn't "tag out," they shrugged it off, too. The feeling was not that

he had let us down by getting skunked, the consensus was more, "Yeah, join the club, that's happened to me, too."

The importance of a hunter getting game has often been discussed. Killing game reinforces to the hunter that he is making the right choices in the sport, getting more skillful. Success keeps a person interested in hunting. Never or hardly ever

being successful at putting something in the pot or on the meat pole is discouraging and causes participants to drop from the ranks. This hurts the hunting tradition and the hunters themselves.

Success at shooting game is vital, but so is getting skunked. In fact, the longer a hunter is in the sport, and the more generally successful he is at getting game, the more important it is to be sprayed once in a while by the metaphorical creature of non-success.

I remember a story about a fisherman who dies, reaches the hereafter and finds himself on a river. He is standing midstream and a trout is rising in a pocket behind a rock. He's not allowed to wade farther, but his cast drops just up-current of the rising fish. He makes the cast and catches the trout, an 8-inch brown. He releases it and sees another fish rising in the same spot. He casts to that, catches that, and it's an 8-inch brown, too. He lets it go and another rises behind the rock. Same result, same small trout. Again and again and again. He can't cast anywhere else and he can't catch any other fish. He's disgusted.

"Is that the way it's going to be for eternity?" he complains. "What kind of heaven is this?"

A voice from the void booms, "Whoever said this is heaven?"

Not being successful all the time is what keeps an activity interesting. The need for challenge is a happy attribute of being human. If every opening morning of buck season we sat on the same rock, saw an identical 8-point come through in the same spot, at the same time, and we shot him the same way, how many of us would want to keep hunting there? We might say at first, "Throw me into that 'briar patch.' I'd love it!" Yet there are worlds of wisdom in the old saying, "Be careful what you wish for; you just might get it." Wishing wisely is a task so difficult that many cultures have fables that tell what happens when a not-thought-out wish comes true, like the tale of the genie and the lamp. Constant win-

ning creates boredom, a real evil in any activity.

A song lyric I know says, "Every pleasure has a edge of pain." In the best hunting, success doesn't come easy, but with some test of difficulty. A reward must be earned to be a reward, not a dumbed-into-it happenstance. I have heard rifle hunters, who shot bucks with great regularity, say that's why they switched to bowhunting or took up muzzleloading or handgun hunting. Or they decided to hold out for bigger bucks or took up chancier still-hunting, rather than sitting in a treestand. The possibility of getting skunked makes hunting a match worthy of our skills, while the hardness of the task adds a zest that brings out hunting's sweetness.

I have purposely refrained from calling not getting game, "failure." Failure is a word with connotations of finality, of irrevocable wrong action, of not measuring up. Failure has the flavor of doing something bad and not being worthy. Failures in hunting are safety and ethical mistakes, and they can be lasting — hurting someone else or injuring the game because the hunter failed to identify the target or take a sure, killing shot. Failures can leave physical as well as emotional scars, and are something more unfortunate than simple non-success or being skunked.

Being skunked leaves nothing wounded but the hunter's pride, and that deserves a deflating prick once in a while, anyway. Hunting is great at stripping away cockiness, and we all occasionally need to be humbled. A hunting friend had so many years of getting a buck with a bow that he was a bit puffed up about his ability. One year the clock of the regular archery season ticked to its last moments and he hadn't tagged a buck. Rather than a large disappointment, however, the non-success was a surprisingly good thing, he told me. It gave a keener edge to his archery hunting the next year, taking the sloppiness out of it, yet put more ease and fun back in. The pressure of keeping a streak alive was

gone. "Don't get me wrong, I'd still like to have my buck streak going," he told me. But because it wasn't, he could go back to just hunting.

I've run out of fingers and toes, many times over, to count the number of days when I've been skunked. Hunting, I tell those who ask me what it's like, is one of the most difficult things I have ever done. But when everything comes together, it feels easy. I remember the hours, the days, scanning the gray and brown woods for a gray and brown deer, trying to spot or hear it before it did me, then the split second task of reacting right when I do. The times that deer snorted behind me, or flagged away before I could get the gun up, or hung up just beyond bow range. When that happened, I would question everything I had learned in 30 years of hunting; I'd feel like a first grader again. Then one day, the circumstances of the deer, the shot and me would come together, and success would be easy. It wouldn't feel so much like accomplishment without the non-success that had taken place, and I wouldn't have learned so much I could use the next time.

Veteran hunters can always tell an

empty braggart by his claim of constant success. "Yeah, I get my deer every opening morning, 8 o'clock, without failure. Two hundred-yard shot each time, too; never get less than a 10-point." Eyes slide to meet other eyes, and knowing looks pass between hunters who are well-seasoned — as in having spent so many seasons in the field they can identify a lie when it trots out in front of them. If the poser isn't discounted as a liar and dismissed as one not welcome in deer camp, he is given a kinder label: "He's just a young pup. He'll find out if he hunts long enough." It's good to forgive your own youthful foibles when you see them mirrored. Wisdom, of any kind, is tinged with humility before the greatness of that which gave us wisdom and the inadequacies of our selves — hunting wisdom is no exception.

Some responsibilities of the hunt are always serious: our conduct toward other hunters and toward the game. As for being skunked, that's a lighter thing that reminds us that hunting always has more to teach, if we will listen, and that, under the orange vest, we're all the laughably, fallibly, the same. □

Days of Pore



THIS NICE BUCK was taken in 1923 southwest of Tionesta in Forest County, near the Venango County line. A notation stated that the deer weighed 192 pounds and was taken with a .45-90 single-shot Ballard rifle.

Summer's Fiddlers

You won't find these fiddlers at your typical hoedown; they play their "music" high in the trees or down in the grass.

HE STALKED through the grasses, ears cupped, head down, and then he squatted, still listening and looking. Steve Rannels was pursuing crickets and katydids behind the Middle Creek Management Area visitors center.

My husband Bruce and I had been fascinated by the compact disc Rannels, Wil Hershberger and Joseph Dillon had recently released called "Songs of Crickets and Katydids of the Mid-Atlantic States," so we arranged to meet Rannels and his wife, Sharon, for what turned out to be several hours of intensive cricket and katydid field identification one warm summer evening.

As soon as Rannels spoke we recognized him as the voice on the CD. He explained that he started the project in 1994 and had recorded 30 species before meeting Marylander Wil Hershberger the following year, at a Cornell Library of Natural Sounds recording workshop. Hershberger then added selections from his Frederick, Maryland locale and worked with Lebanon Valley graduate student Joseph Dillon on the audio engineering. Altogether, they recorded 40 species for the CD.

"I spent long hours getting them," Rannels told us. He had bought covered Tupperware dishes, cut out the plastic between the ribs, and replaced it with nylon mesh. Each insect he caught, he put in an altered dish, and then took it home and

placed it on a big, stuffed chair that absorbed the sound. In the dark, he pointed the microphone at the insect and ran tape until it called. Some were more difficult to record than others. Sometimes he had to wait long hours in his hot, unairconditioned, closed house for an insect to sing.

"I had a robust conehead katydid and couldn't get it to call," Rannels said. "Wil had sent me one by Federal Express. It sat there for a couple days and wouldn't call. Finally, I put it on our porch and other insects calling encouraged it to sing. Above the din of our neighbor's air conditioning unit, I recorded it. Then I took it back inside and played its song and it answered to it."

A native of Lititz, Rannels now lives in Hershey and works as a physiologist at the Hershey Medical Center. An avid birder, the tall, thin, curly brown-haired Rannels is a member of the Lancaster Bird Club and often leads birding trips for them.

But when the birds stopped singing in early summer, he wanted to know more about the songs of crickets and katydids. After all, "crickets and katydids are valuable food sources for birds," he told us. "I do bugs when there are no birds."

Unlike birds, though, many look-alike species of crickets and katydids can be identified in the field only by their songs. For instance, until the 1930s, entomologists believed that all field crickets in North

America belonged to one species. Then, a researcher in North Carolina discovered that there were four species, which he called the triller, the woods cricket, the mountain cricket, and the beach cricket. Another researcher added two more species. All showed differences in singing pulse rates and patterns, except for the northern spring field cricket and northern fall field cricket. Those species are identical in physical characteristics and song, so Rannels says that if he hears a field cricket chirping before July 15, he calls it a northern spring field cricket. After July 15, he assumes it's a northern fall field cricket.

Not all the insect choristers are that difficult to distinguish. What the late Vincent G. Dethier, in his wonderful book *Crickets and Katydid*s, *Concerts and Solos*, calls "this world of trills, tinklings, buzzes, shuffles, crackles and clicks," is made mostly by males calling to attract females. They use the file on one broadened front wing and the scraper on the other to produce sound like someone playing a fiddle. Both front wings contain a file and a scraper so, theoretically, they could switch back and forth, but they rarely do. Crickets almost always sing with the right wing over the left, katydids with the left wing over the right. Crickets and katydids hear the songs through a pair of ears called tympana on each foreleg or tibia, just below what we would call the knee of the insect.

Although the life histories of most cricket and katydid species have not been studied, the courtship and mating of tree crickets in general, and a few katydid species in particular, has been.

Back in 1989, David H. Funk,

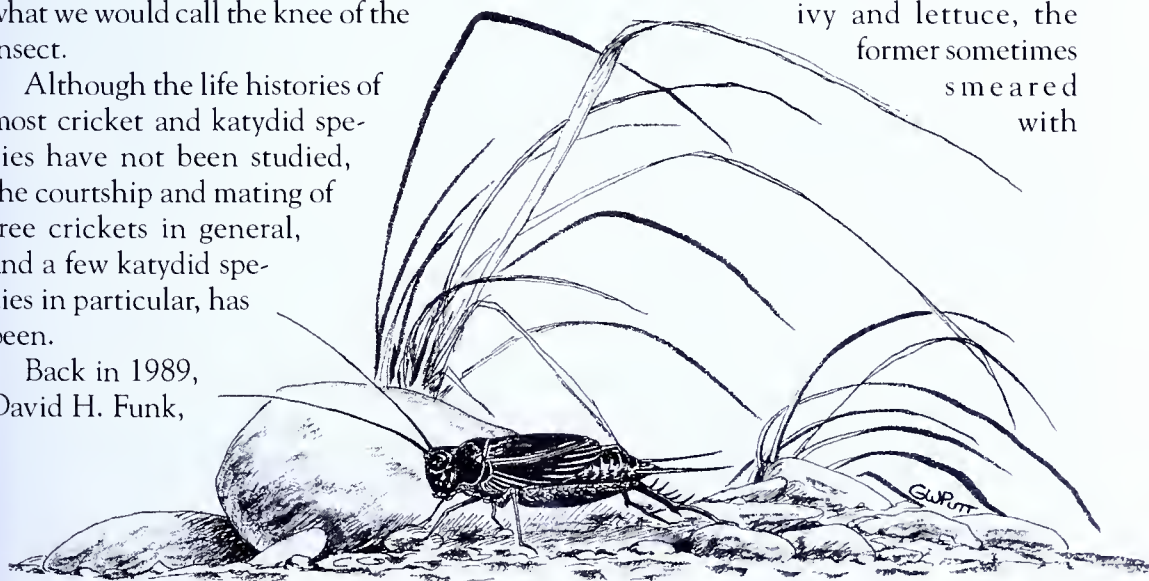
who had spent 10 years photographing and observing night insects near his home in southeastern Pennsylvania, published an article on the mating of tree crickets in *Scientific American*.

He discovered that in answer to a fiddling male tree cricket, an interested female approaches a male from behind, because the sound from the male's fiddling is amplified by and deflected off the male's wings. When the male senses a female is approaching, he stops singing, turns around, and touches the female with his antennae to make sure she is the right species. If she is, he resumes singing and, according to his species, rocks from side to side or pounds the ground with his abdomen. If she is still interested, she climbs on his back and feeds on a substance he secretes while he mates with her.

Pennsylvania seems to be a hotbed of cricket and katydid researchers because it was Davison Greenawalt Grove, a recently retired professor at Wilson College and a native of Chambersburg, who wrote his Ph.D. dissertation on the natural history of the greater angle-winged katydid.

"My interest in this katydid stems from the bug collecting days of childhood," he wrote.

For much of his life, he has kept wild ones captive and fed them on elm and mulberry leaves, in season, or ivy and lettuce, the former sometimes smeared with



peanut butter, out of season. Both male and female greater angle-winged katydids sing, the female answering the male's "tick" with a softer call that sounds like the clicking of fingernails. They also check each other out by stroking antennae before mating.

The female then lays eggs in double rows on twigs, which hatch in early spring. The young ones look like miniature adults without wings and sexual parts, and molt through six instars before reaching adulthood.

Although the greater angle-winged katydid is the most widespread of the 100 U.S. katydid species and is found throughout the country, it's the eastern or true northern katydid that produces the thrumming nightly chorus of August and September.

Philadelphia naturalist John Bartram made the first reference to them in 1751 when he wrote, "It was fair and pleasant and the great green grasshopper began to sing." He called them "catedidist," which comes from the Greek word "catachesis," meaning "to din in one's ears." But it's this species that truly sings *katydid*, *katydidn't*.

Vincent Dethier writes that true northern katydids are "one of the few members of their family that thrive in the neighborhood of human beings." Early colonists cleared the land, built their houses, and the big, plump, dark green, two-inch long true northern katydids became part of the scene. Those "raucous, argumentative insects [that] reside in small colonies high in trees," were susceptible to tree spraying for gypsy moths and Japanese beetles. Dethier claims that many colonies were totally eliminated, so places where they used to sing are now bereft of that swelling chorus.

But Steve Rannels had a male true northern katydid in a mesh-covered jar to show us.

"Aren't they wonderful?" he asked.

Indeed they are. But because we have them by the thousands at our place, we were more interested in the male fork-tailed bush katydid in another jar, named for the U-shape notch on his tail. This denizen of bushes and tall grasses bordering woods calls mostly in late afternoon, uttering soft *zeep, zeep, zeeps* separated by clicks. A few minutes later,

Rannels found a female in a bush behind the visitors center.

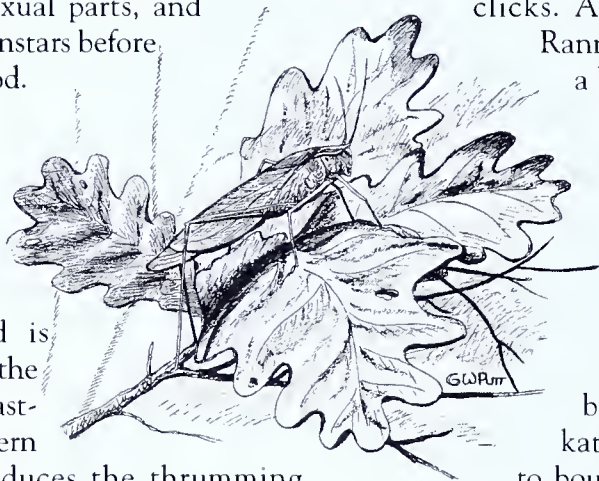
The mixture of long grasses, wildflowers and bushes in this area provided fruitful hunting as daylight faded. It wasn't easy, though, because crickets and katydids use vegetation to bounce the sound. Still,

Rannels's persistence paid off.

In the bushes we heard the short trills at different pitches of jumping bush crickets, the *tche, tche, TCHE*, of curve-tailed bush katydids, and the sets of three quick, buzzy pulses of oblong-winged katydids, one of which Rannels caught to show us.

The taller grasses and clumps of wildflowers harbored the loudly trilling broad-winged tree crickets, the steady buzzing — like a bee on speed — of a round-tipped conehead katydid, and the musical trill of black-horned tree crickets. But we had to listen more closely to hear the quiet *tick-tick* of a greater angle-winged katydid.

At dusk a green heron flew across the rising moon and a huge V of Canada geese called overhead in the fading, pink sky. That was when we drove down to the wet areas beside the lake to search for wetland species, such as the male black-legged meadow katydid that we watched as he buzzed *did, did, did, dzz* on a branch. He had beautiful, long, waving antennae, and we could see his wings vibrating as he called. We also listened to the *treeb, treeb, treeb* of



For more information about "Songs of Crickets and Katydid of the Mid-Atlantic States," write to Steve Rannels at 237 E. Areba Avenue, Hershey, PA 17543. Or, check the website <http://members.aol.com/typeinawhershberg/page> in the search box. Unfortunately there are no field guides to crickets and katydids, so the Dethier book is the best written source with its line drawings and identification key of the species he studied.

a long-beaked conehead katydid in the wetland.

Along a back road at Middle Creek we stopped to listen to a northern mole cricket emitting frog-like, low-pitched *chup, chup, chups* from his underground burrow. By then, it was dark, and we had joined a steady procession of deer spotters whose powerful searchlights swept the fields while Rannels's flashlight swept the roadside. He also drove slowly with his head out the window, trying to hear the fiddlers above the background roar from a nearby race track.

Once he stopped to show us a jumping bush cricket running down a branch, and we listened to the rapidly pulsing, buzzy calls of sword-bearer conehead katydids singing in chorus. He also caught an ob-long-winged katydid that had little brown

spots on its wings and sang sets of three quick, buzzy pulses.

Finally, we drove into a patch of woods where Rannels stopped to scoop a small, light green, less than an inch-long, narrow-winged tree cricket off his windshield. Then, after hearing a modest, rapid *chi, chi, chi*, he tracked down a round-winged katydid near the ground.

At 10 p.m. we called it a night. Rannels had identified 17 species for us, but altogether he has found 31 species at Middle Creek — 15 crickets and 16 katydids. "Middle Creek," he says, "has been my favorite hunting-listening grounds because of the wide diversity of habitats and, therefore, species."

Of course, all of this encouraged us to identify the crickets and katydids on our property. We made a modest start last August, identifying eight with the help of the Rannels, Hershberger and Dillon CD, but it was not easy. Still, we have been inspired by Steve Rannels and have made a long-term commitment to learning the insect fiddlers.

As Howard Ensign Evans once wrote in his classic *Life on a Little Known Planet*: "I do believe that an intimacy with the world of crickets and their kind can be salutary — not for what they are likely to teach us about ourselves, but because they remind us, if we will let them, that there are other voices, other rhythms, other strivings and fulfillments than ours." □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Landscaping for Wildlife in Pennsylvania, by Marcus Schneck, Published by and order from the Wild Resource Conservation Fund, P.O. Box 8764, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8764, 160 pp., \$20 donation, which includes shipping & handling, and helps fund nongame projects in Pennsylvania. Most of us don't have the large tracts of land that can make a difference on a grand scale for endangered or threatened species, but every bit of new habitat can help wildlife. This book is a down-to-earth look at backyard wildlife habitat, which will also enhance wildlife viewing opportunities.

Straight from the Bowstring

By Mike Raykovicz

If you think about it, wind is intriguing. Where does it come from? Where is it going? To be consistently successful at hunting deer with a bow, however, you had better consider the effects of moving air.

When the Bough Bends

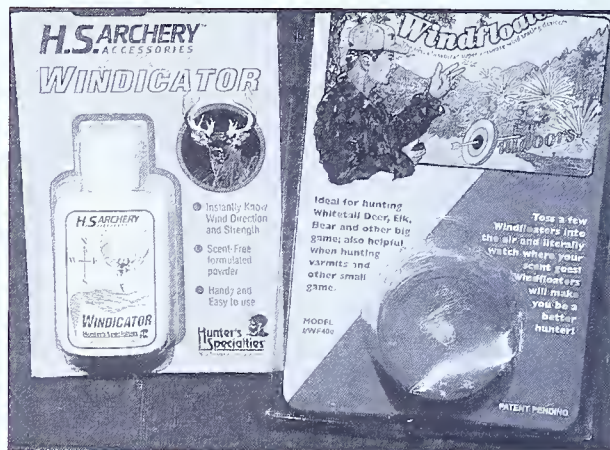
NOTHING, in my opinion, puts more of a damper on bowhunting than wind. I don't mind rain, snow or even cold temperatures, but wind is another matter. High wind causes whitetails to become skittish and lie low. Variable wind ruins even the best-planned hunt, because unfelt wind currents can betray a hunter quicker than an arrow leaving a bowstring. A hunter not paying attention to the wind, or who isn't aware of how whitetails behave in windy conditions, is going to have problems.

Every fall, thousands of bowhunters go afield confident the spot they have chosen will be productive. Through preseason scouting these hunters have figured out the routes deer will likely use when moving to or from their bedding and feeding areas. These hunters often see deer, and many are even picky about which deer they want to shoot. At some point in the season, things usually go right and they get the shot they want. Other less fortunate hunters may wait all season without getting a shot. Why the difference?

There are many reasons for lack of suc-

cess, but failure to consider the effect of moving air ranks at the top of the list. There is no doubt about it: Beat a whitetail's sense of smell, and you'll have a chance to tie a tag on its ear.

I learned the importance of stand placement and the effect of wind early in my bowhunting career, and I learned these lessons the hard way. In the mid-'60s I hunted private land in eastern Bradford County. After a lot of preseason scouting, I thought I had the perfect stand location, between a steep hillside and a large field of corn. Between my stand and the corn, a small creek meandered through a thick field of goldenrod. A well used trail leading down



COMMERCIAL wind detection products to help counteract a whitetail's sense of smell work well and are readily available.

the slope, through the goldenrod and to the cornfield had a lot of fresh deer sign. The spot seemed ideal, and it would have been if it weren't for the hill behind me.

Hunting the spot the first week of the season, I spooked plenty of deer that winded me on their way down the hill. On more occasions than I care to remember, the snorting deer reminded me of my poor choice of stand sites. As a neophyte bowhunter, I never fully understood how important the effect of wind currents could be on the outcome of a hunt. I erroneously figured I was far enough from the hillside to avoid detection.

A whitetail's sense of smell is legendary. Some say a deer can smell 1,000 or even 10,000 times better than a human. We may never know exactly what this factor is, but unless hunters take precautions to avoid a whitetail's best defense, they will go a long time between venison meals.

The sun heating the ground in the morning warms the earth, producing air currents or thermals. These warm currents of air rise in the morning then, later in the evening, sink when the sun sets and the ground once again begins to cool. Before placing a treestand, bowhunters need to be cognizant of these thermals, so deer don't pick up human scent once the hunter is in the stand.

For example, in the morning, especially near a hillside, the warmer air will be carried upward from a hunter's stand and betray him to any deer located on higher ground. Conversely, in the evening, these same air currents will carry the hunter's scent downward, and could be a problem if the stand is not placed high enough in the tree.

I use several methods for checking thermals. There are commercial products available for checking wind direction and for observing thermals. One type comes in a plastic squeeze bottle and contains fine talc powder. A light squeeze on the bottle, and a puff of telltale talc betrays the direction of even the slightest breeze.

Another commercial wind detection product consists of strands of what appear to be polyester fibers. These fine fibers are contained in a small plastic receptacle with a hole on top. Pulling a small amount of the material out of the opening and allowing it to float through the air gives the hunter a pretty good indication of wind direction and any thermals surrounding the stand.

These products work well, but I prefer another method. The seeds of the common milkweed plant work just as well as the polyester fiber and are free. I gather milkweed pods in late September when they are dry and the seeds are ready to spread. Don't gather any pods that aren't brown and split, because the seeds inside green or partly green milkweed pods are sticky and still clumped tightly together.

I carry several pods in my jacket pocket, releasing the seeds whenever I want to check for thermals. The seeds float in the air, rising and falling on unseen currents. Watching them gives me excellent insight as to how my scent is moving through the air columns surrounding my stand. If milkweed is not available, thistledown works just as well. Any rural roadside or fallow field should provide a season — if not a lifetime supply of either of these handy wind indicators.

According to a meteorologist acquaintance of mine, wind is caused when cold air from a high-pressure system meets rising masses of warm, low-pressure air. The greater the differences in pressure between the rising and sinking air masses, the greater the wind speed. Approaching fronts or other weather developments cause variable winds. These winds can last for several days, persisting until the front responsible passes through the area.

Aside from staying home and not hunting on windy days, hunters must contend with the wind by hunting smart and avoiding locations where scent can betray their presence. Normally, I have several stand sites scouted weeks before the season opens,

and sometimes I place my stands just yards apart to mitigate the effect of the wind. This tactic allows me to choose the best location depending on wind direction. In a really good site, there is always a preferable stand for each wind direction. If I think I'm likely to see deer, I don't want to have to hunt somewhere else just because there is an unfavorable wind. Wind blowing constantly from the same general direction is relatively easy to deal with. Variable wind requires different tactics.



SPLIT, brown milkweed pods offer an unlimited supply of wind detectors. Allowing the milkweed seeds to float freely indicates how thermals are moving.

Not one to give up a hunting opportunity, I find inconsistent wind to be more of a nuisance than a detriment to my hunting plans. Big woods and hollows are not the places to be when the wind is constantly changing. This is usually not a major problem in the agricultural areas where I hunt. In variable wind conditions, I hunt near the edges of farm fields. The wind may shift, but most of the time it has little impact on my hunt, provided my stand is placed high enough in the tree. If all you have to hunt are large areas of hardwood and conifers, consider hunting along the edges where wind won't funnel your scent through the woods.

When positioning my stands, I select each site based on the amount of deer sign, the proximity of the food source, and the direction of the prevailing wind. However, placing just one stand and expecting to hunt from it on a daily basis will limit the number of deer seen over the course of the season. No stand is foolproof, so if a spot shows a great deal of promise, I place several stands in suitable nearby locations just in case I have to contend with unpredictable wind.

Deer use the wind like a pilot uses radar. They don't need to see what lies ahead as long as they have a favorable wind. Deer



are particularly skittish when the wind is gusty or when it is strong and variable. In calm air, deer use their sense of smell, sight and hearing to avoid danger. During periods of high wind, though, diminished hearing causes deer to be extremely nervous. More than any other time, their sense of smell is their main means of defense; their nose is what will save their life and they know it.

In high wind conditions deer are likely to lie low, not because they seek protection from the wind, but because their senses are diminished, making them more nervous. In my experience, the higher the wind velocity, the less deer movement

there is apt to be. The exception to this is the first two weeks of November, when deer are moving because of the rut. During the pre-rut and rut periods, deer will be on the move in all but the most severe gale.

Early in the archery season, when deer are relatively undisturbed and move in natural patterns, their behavior can be predictable. Undisturbed deer have fairly set daily patterns and will usually move to the food source just before sundown. Determining which way the deer will arrive at the food source should be a primary objective for any bowhunter. Prevailing winds or air currents will aid in that determination.

Crosswinds often confront archers hunting near, or even in, food sources. A crosswind is any wind blowing across an approaching whitetail's face. Under crosswind conditions, a hunter placing a stand to the left or the right of a deer's path most likely will be detected by the deer's sense of smell. Deer often do not hesitate to move perpendicular to a crosswind so a bowhunter standing directly in front of a deer's path will go undetected.

Deer sometime move with the wind at their back, but not often. If the wind is blowing directly into your face, consider moving to another location. Does or fawns may sometimes move with the wind at their backs, but very few large bucks will make that mistake.

Hunting in areas surrounded by hills during windy conditions can be tough. These spots pose a problem because wind can suddenly change, and because it's so unpredictable, it can be difficult to deal with. In flat, open farmland the wind is usually blowing from one direction. If an approaching front causes high wind, consider hunting relatively flat areas. These are the best locations for encountering a fairly consistent wind direction. Wind is an ever-changing factor in the hunting equation, and no location is foolproof. Hunters who pay strict attention to the weather and who monitor daily weather conditions will be

at a distinct advantage over those who don't.

Years ago I bought a small weather radio at Radio Shack, and now I seldom go hunting before checking current weather conditions. By checking the weather forecast, I'm aware of wind direction at my hunting site, and as I drive there I mentally evaluate which of my stands would be most appropriate for current conditions.

Weather can be fickle, and because it's ever changing, can cause abrupt changes in the whitetail's daily feeding and resting cycle. This is especially true if there is a big difference in the atmospheric pressure of the passing fronts.

Nothing can beat a whitetail's nose when it comes to detecting human odor, but once the effect of wind and wind currents are understood, there are steps a hunter can take to minimize the effect of troublesome wind.

The first step is to reduce the amount of human odor coming from your body. During archery season, I shower and wash my hair with unscented soaps and shampoos. My hunting clothing is also washed in unscented laundry detergent made specifically for hunters, and then it's hung outside at least a month before the season.

When hanging a treestand, the size of the tree and the topography usually dictate how high the stand should be. I make sure my stand is placed about 12-15 feet off the ground. Any lower, and the hunter's scent will not be carried over or away from approaching deer. Any higher and the shot will be difficult, because the angle will be too steep.

Finally, I watch the wind and choose my hunting site carefully. Nothing will fool a whitetail's nose every time, and most of us will be betrayed by a fickle breeze or by a nasty wind at least once every season. It's all part of bowhunting, but by understanding wind patterns and taking steps to eliminate human odor, wind can be your worst enemy or your best friend. It depends on how you work it. □

In plain terms, ignition in firearms is the act of setting fire to the powder charge in the chamber of a black powder gun, or the powder charge in a chambered cartridge or shotshell. But, ignition also depends on several variable factors.

Ignition

“I DON'T BELIEVE it makes one iota of difference which primer is used in a rifle or shotgun shell. They all make fire, and fire ignites the powder. Why is so much fuss made over which primer is used?”

A customer made that statement back in the days when I operated a reloading shop. Without knowing much about primers and their specific functions, the man's statement probably sounds reasonable. However, it misses the point by a mile.

The first thing that must be discussed is the definition of ignition. Just exactly what is it? Well, with a firearm it refers to setting fire to or igniting the powder charge in the shell case. I can go a step further and say ignition is part of the functioning cycle after the firing pin detonates the priming compound. The resulting flame and incandescent particles travel through the flash hole and ignite the powder charge.

However, ignition depends on two factors: the position of the powder charge in the case and the loading density. Ignition will not be the same in cases having powder charges in different positions. For instance, if the powder charge is concentrated at the rear of the shell, ignition will be different from the same amount of powder in an identical case if the charge is spread along the length of the case. Any

change in position of the powder charge, say the charge is mostly against the base of the bullet, will also change ignition performance.

Not all types of powders ignite the same, which means the physical shape of the powder granules plays an important role. Likewise, the amount or lack of flash inhibitor, the brisance quality of the priming compound, along with the physical condition of the flash hole, all have a bearing on ignition.

In case the word brisance doesn't ring a bell, it can best be described as an explosive to detonate. All priming compounds used in primers are brisant, but the greater the amount of brisance, the greater the demolition power. For instance, magnum primers have a greater degree of explosive power.

Ignition, naturally, is as old as gunpowder, and it got off to a shaky start and was rather primitive for many decades. The first ignition was a burning stick, or a hot coal was applied to the touch hole. This really required two people to fire the early weapons. Then came the burning wick, which was pulled down on the touch hole by an S shaped piece of metal called a serpentine. This eliminated to some degree the second person, but the burning wick was a

dead giveaway to where the shooter was. Further improvements on the serpentine made it work like a trigger. However, the problem with the lighted wick was that it not only was dangerous, but that it also was nearly impossible to keep burning in wet weather.

The serpentine was followed by the wheel lock and the snaphaunce, which resembled a pecking chicken. The snaphaunce was the forerunner of the flintlock, which lasted for centuries. The per-

ing compound goes through the flash hole in the bottom of the primer pocket and ignites the rear portion of the powder charge in the case. The powder burns forward progressively, creating a large amount of hot gases. Instantly, the case walls are pushed against the chamber walls and the shell head is pushed against the bolt face. This is normally referred to as offset pressure. It is generally agreed that offset pressure uses about 7,000 psi. With no more room for case expansion, the gases push the

bullet through the bore and on its way to the target.

It's worth noting that primer cup thickness is determined by what the primer will be used for. For example, a pistol primer has thinner cup walls than a rifle primer simply because the

blow of a pistol firing pin is not as severe as the blow from a rifle firing pin. There is also considerable difference in the brisance. Even though pistol primers will fit in centerfire rifle cases, it's dangerous to use pistol primers in rifle ammo.

For all practical purposes, there are two types of primers used in today's sporting ammunition. One is the Berdan type, which was invented by an American, A. C. Hobbs, who worked for the Union Metallic Company. He named the primer after his friend, Colonel H. W. Berdan, who helped Hobbs with many ammunition experiments.

The Berdan primer consists of a cup, priming compound and a foil-type cover. There is no anvil in the primer. The anvil is a part of the bottom of the primer pocket. Also, Berdan primed cases have two flash holes instead of a single flash hole. Berdan primed cases can be reloaded by using special decapping tools.

The Boxer primer is used almost exclu-

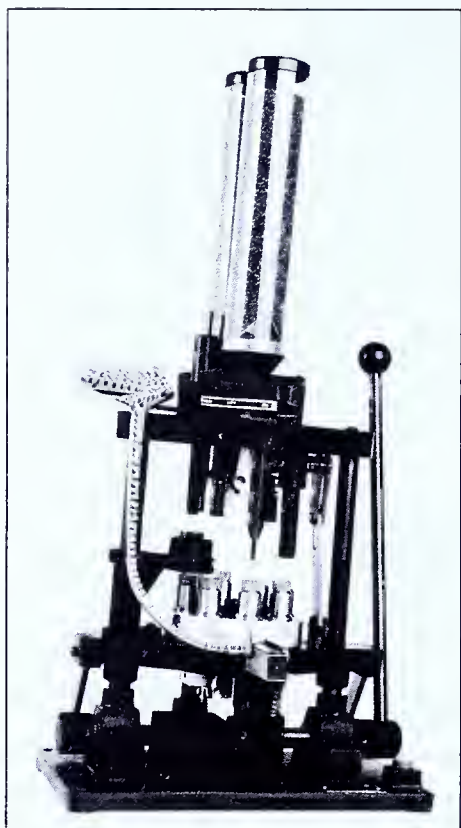


THIS EARLY pinfire cartridge was first manufactured in 1866 but was discontinued in 1868 because it had too many defects. The pin was placed in the bottom of the cartridge case and then crimped into the rim to hold it in place. The pin acted as an anvil to explode the priming mixture on receiving the blow from the hammer.

cussion cap dealt a mortal blow to the flintlock, but after a very short lifespan, it too, was relegated to the ranks of the unwanted when the self-contained metallic cartridge came on the scene in the late 19th century.

A primer is a relatively simple device made up of a metal cup, priming compound covered with a protective disc, and an anvil. Primers are used in centerfire rifle cartridges and shotshells. Basically, they are held friction-tight in the primer pocket, although the military crimps the pocket around the top edge of the primers to keep them from being loosened or knocked out in automatic weapons.

The anvil is a curved piece of metal (something like a V), and when placed in the cup, there is a small amount of priming compound between the top of the V and the inside bottom of the cup. When the firing pin strikes the primer and indents it, the priming compound between the cup and the anvil is crushed, causing a detonation. The flame from the detonated prim-



PRIMERS should not be left in priming tubes or trays on progressive presses. Put the unused ones back in their original containers.

shotshell case cannot support a primer in the same manner as a rifle or pistol case. The shotshell primer is equipped with its own supporting cap. The shotshell primer (technically called a battery cup primer) is a two-piece affair. The battery cup has a flange on the top, which prevents the cup from going too deep in the primer pocket. The primer is inside the cup. It also acts as a supporting system for the anvil.

In a rifle primer, the anvil rests firmly on the bottom of the primer pocket. Another interesting aspect of shotshell primers is that they all are pretty much the same in shape and size, but their influence on the total charge is vastly different. In shotshell loading, many experts claim that it's absolutely essential for the primer to be compatible with the rest of the load. Some reloading authorities do not completely agree with this, but it's probably wise to use the exact components suggested in a modern shotshell reloading manual.

The rimfire cartridge has a different primer set up. The priming compound is in the rim of the cartridge head. The priming mixture is installed in an almost liquid state. The correct amount of priming mix is placed on the base of the rimfire case and the cases are then rotated on a turning table. Centrifugal force pushes the wet mixture into the rim where a gradual drying of the mix leaves the priming compound in the rim. The blow of the firing pin crushes the dried priming mix between the two walls of the rim, which results in an explosion and then ignition.

Although the primer simply starts ignition, a spent primer can reveal a good bit about a load combination. A primer that has been flattened until it literally fills the gap around itself is often an indication of excessive pressure. Another sign of excessive pressure come when a small ridge (crater) of the primer cup metal is formed around the firing pin indentation. Nor-

sively in American sporting ammo. Back in 1867, E. M. Boxer, a British colonel, invented the boxer-type primer. There's somewhat of a paradox here with an American inventing the Berdan primer used mostly in Europe, and an Englishman inventing the boxer primer used in America.

There was another primer called the Benet, invented by Colonel S.V. Benet. The U. S. Army adopted it in 1866, but it was touchy. It was a cup primer without an anvil, and the priming compound was so sensitive that rough handling could ignite it.

Basically, primers come in two sizes — small and large. They can be defined further as being either rifle or pistol. The difference between the two is cup thickness, priming composition mixture, sensitivity, and a slight difference in height.

A shotshell case does not have a flash hole punched through the bottom of a primer pocket. Instead, the primer itself has the flash hole. The reason for this is that a

mally, the crater can be easily seen and felt. However, damaged firing pins can cause craters. When cratering occurs, it should be taken as a sign of excessive pressure, and handloaders should immediately reduce the powder charge significantly.

Handloaders, more or less, take primers for granted, but primers can be volatile. Note that primers come boxed in rows or even in individual holes (mostly shotshell primers) to prevent sympathetic detonation of the entire carton. Never dump primers in a jar or can. They do create a dust and can explode from static electricity, friction or a hard knock to the container. It's possible when one primer ignites, the rest will also explode. Primers should not be left in priming tubes or trays on progressive presses. Put the unused ones back in their original containers. RCBS has

bench-mounted and handheld strip priming tools. This is the safest priming system I've used, because the primers do not come in contact with each other. The primers are inserted (with the proper RCBS strip loading tool) into individual holes in plastic strips.

It's worth noting that early primers had mixes of fulminate of mercury, potassium chlorate or both. These substances left a salt residue, which weakened cases and pitted bores. For the most part, today's primers contain lead styphnate as the primary initiator. This, or other modern priming compounds are not harmful.

There's more to ignition than the primer being just the match that ignites the powder charge. The primer used should, to some degree, be matched with the powder charge. □

***Fun Games* — By Connie Mertz**

Bobcat Biology

Copy the letter at the end of each true statement in the spaces, and then complete the statement at the bottom.

- _____ Bobcats are carnivores. (L)
- _____ A bobcat's favorite prey species are hares and rabbits. (Y)
- _____ Bobcats are mostly diurnal. (T)
- _____ A bobcat's home range is 12 square miles. (N)
- _____ Another name for the bobcat is bay lynx. (X)
- _____ The bobcat is Pennsylvania's only canine predator. (C)
- _____ A bobcat's back legs are longer than its front legs. (R)
- _____ A bobcat's age is determined by examining its teeth. (U)
- _____ Bobcats are one of only a few predators that prey on porcupines. (F)
- _____ Bobcats are color-blind, but they have acute eyesight. (U)
- _____ Bobcats cannot swim. (W)
- _____ There are eight bobcat subspecies in the continental U.S. (S)

The scientific name for bobcat is _____
_____.

answers on p. 64

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

There were 67,669 vehicle-deer collisions reported in Michigan in 1999, which is a three percent increase from 1998.

There were 318 elk taken by hunters during the 2000-2001 season in Michigan, which biologists hoped brought the population down to between 775 to 800 animals. Elk were reintroduced into Michigan in 1917, and since 1984, 3,389 have been taken by hunters.

Hunters in Wisconsin took 2,943 bears during the 2000 season.

There are about 400 whooping cranes in the world, including approximately 73 in Florida. When a poacher killed two last fall, the North Florida Chapter of Safari Club International immediately joined the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in posting a reward for information leading to a conviction. The 18-year-old who pled guilty to killing the endangered birds was sentenced to 75 days in jail, 2½ years probation and suspension of his drivers license.

A three-year study on immuno-contraception for deer population control near Mumford, Connecticut has turned up flat. The study, which was sponsored and conducted by the Humane Society of the United States, and included the University of New Hampshire and the Connecticut Wildlife Division, found that using birth control as a method of wildlife management far too time consuming, expensive, and difficult to be effective.

Last year a record 63 bald eagle pairs nested in Ohio and produced a record 89 young.

There were 21 hunting related incidents — including two fatalities — reported during the 9-day regular gun deer season in Wisconsin last year. With approximately 750,000 deer hunters afield, the incident rate was 2.8 per 100,000 participants. The 2000 season ties for the fifth safest year of gun deer hunting in Wisconsin.

Connecticut won a key wildlife decision on the issue of fawn deer when a judge of the Hartford Superior Court ruled in favor of the Department of Environmental Protection in defining the term fawn as a deer with a spotted coat. The decision came in response to a complaint filed by the Animal Rights Front claiming the DEP illegally allowed fawn deer to be harvested during a controlled hunt. The Animal Rights Front interpreted the phrase fawn deer to be any deer less than one year old.

A harvest of 1.3 million light geese on the mid-continent flyway during the 1999-2000 hunting season may reduce destruction of the birds' overgrazed arctic breeding grounds, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The harvest in the U.S. is a 23 percent increase from the 1998-1999 season, and more than 80 percent larger than the harvest in the 1997-1998 season.

Answer: LYNX RUFUS.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR WILDLIFE

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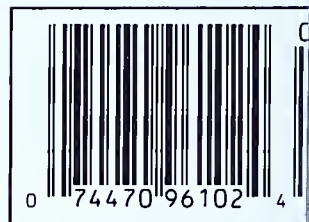
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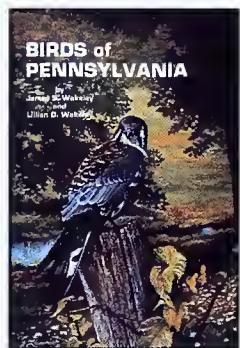
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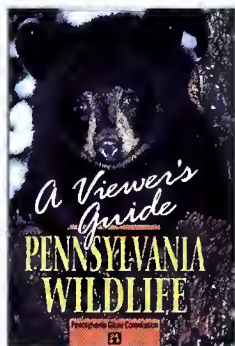


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Price: \$12.26

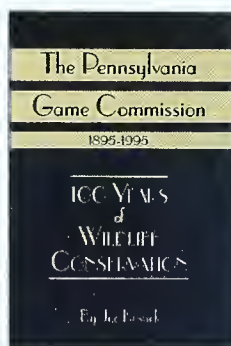
Gone for the Day is a compilation of Game News columns written and illustrated by famed wildlife artist and naturalist, the late Ned Smith.
Price: \$5.66



Pennsylvania Wildlife: A Viewer's Guide, by Kathy and Hal Korber, features 93 sites noted for their wildlife viewing potential. Directions, maps and photos included.
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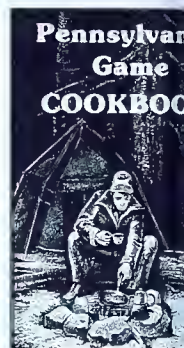
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Pennsylvania Game Commission: 1895-1995 by Joe Kosack, covers the agency's first 100 years, includes more than 60 historical photographs.
Price: \$12.26

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Share a Hunt

IF YOU HAVE A YOUNG son or daughter, niece or nephew, grandchild, friend or neighbor who wants to go hunting, take him or her out for squirrels. Squirrels are perfect for introducing anybody to what hunting is all about. No special equipment is needed, yet bagging a bushytail requires the same patience, shooting skill, woodslore — and luck — as any other game animal. Fortunately, squirrels are so widespread and abundant that finding them is relatively easy and there's usually plenty of action to keep a young mind occupied. More important, squirrel hunting is great for teaching not just safety and ethics, but that hunting is not about killing an animal; it's about enjoying the outdoors.

This year's youth squirrel hunt is October 6 and October 8. No hunting license is required. To participate, a youngster needs only to have completed a hunter education course and be accompanied by an adult, just like in any other hunting season.

This will mark the sixth youth squirrel hunt. Scheduled the week before the early small game season, to take advantage of the Columbus Day holiday, the season offers uncrowded conditions and, most times, delightful weather at what can be the most colorful time of year. For more on squirrel hunting and getting new hunters started — and even a specially designed sight-in target — check out Bob Sopchick's "The Spirit of Autumn," on page 34.

The youth squirrel season is but one example of the Game Commission's efforts to make hunting as user-friendly as possible. The youth waterfowl seasons — this year scheduled for September 22 — and expanded antlerless deer seasons have, at least in part, been done to increase hunting opportunities. In addition, the "youth field days" concept developed more than 10 years ago, and the advanced hunter education, home-study hunter ed courses, the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman and other outreach programs in the works now, are all designed to encourage more youngsters and others to give hunting a try. Low license fees for those 16 and under make it most affordable, too.

In recent years many, if not most, state wildlife agencies have implemented expanded hunting opportunities, special youth hunts and mentoring programs to encourage youngsters to give hunting a try. In fact, in 1999 hunting license sales nationwide went past the 15 million mark for the first time since 1996, reports the National Shooting Sports Foundation, and the reason for at least much of the upswing is being attributed to the expanded hunting opportunities and youth related programs, along with the fact that deer and turkeys (and, in some states, waterfowl) are more plentiful than at any time, making hunting better than ever.

Throughout the country efforts are underway to give more kids an opportunity to experience the outdoors through hunting. The future of hunting, as well as wildlife conservation and habitat preservation in general, is dependent upon a strong appreciation of wildlife and the outdoors among the younger generation of today.

If there's a special young person in your life, spend some time this October in the squirrel woods, or in a duck blind or on a game lands for pheasants and rabbits, and show them how much fun hunting can be. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

I want to thank the Game Commission for allowing junior hunters the opportunity to experience greater chances of success due to changes in the antlerless deer hunting regulations. Even though we know killing an animal does not make a hunt a "success," younger hunters do need to experience some sense of accomplishment or they will not continue in this great sport. Our future depends on them and we need to do everything we can to give them as many positive experiences as we can.

H. ARNOLD
ROBESONIA

Editor:

"Strictly Sticks" would like to thank you for your generous donation to our fifth annual rendezvous. We again saw increased attendance at this year's event, making us feel we are doing something good. It appears obvious to me that traditional archery is steadily growing in our area as well as across the country, especially among the ranks of women and youngsters.

S. MITCHELL
MT. PLEASANT

Editor:

Bob Whitman and I were turkey hunting the second day of the spring season when we heard a gobbler sounding off in the woods across the field from where we were. We set up our decoys and made a few calls, but the gobbler wouldn't come into the open field. I

then moved across the field to the woods, away from the gobbler, hoping to lure the bird in. I made a call, and to my surprise, another gobbler came up the field towards me. I tried to turn, but the old bird saw me. The gobbler flew up in the direction of Bob, set his wings and landed in with the decoys. Lucky Bob quickly called that longbeard into range and also put eight holes in one of the decoys. Who says turkeys don't fly into decoys?

T. HOEGER,
EDINBORO

Editor:

In your July issue, the story "The Right Place at the Right Time," the WCO stalks through the woods after a poacher or someone baiting over deer during buck season.

The officer then puts on camouflage overalls.

He is lucky the poacher or someone else didn't mistake him for a deer.

If I have to wear fluorescent orange, then everybody does.

W. LAMBING,
PENN HILLS

WCOs are required to wear fluorescent orange while in the field checking hunters, but there are exceptions for instances where such use would be counterproductive.

Editor:

As a Pennsylvanian who has been hunting here 60 years, I'm interested in the dramatic changes made to the deer hunting seasons, but other than in your July editorial, I've read nothing about how the concurrent deer seasons will affect safety. Also, with so many licenses and opportunities, it seems too many hunters are boasting about how many deer they can kill, which isn't the spirit of hunting.

C. MILLS, JR.
HUNTINGDON VALLEY

Concurrent deer seasons have not been a safety problem here or in other states where they're held. As Linda Steiner discusses in her column this month, all hunters need to be aware of how what they say can be perceived by nonhunters.

Editor:

Sure liked the July issue. Seeing a Ned Smith painting on the cover brought back a lot of wonderful memories of what a great artist and writer he was.

Having the horizontal image turned to fit your cover format must have been a first for your magazine, too, and even if it wasn't, it was still eye-catching.

P. DILLON,
WEST CHESTER

**Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters,"
2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797.
Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.**

My Favorite

I TURN ON the switch as we step into the room, and the light casts shadows of the mounted deer heads in weird shapes across the walls. My 2½-year-old son is fascinated with the trophies, and I hold him up to see them. I feel his quick breath and small hands on my face, and then watch his bright eyes gaze in wonder. It's the same look I see as he pauses to watch geese flying overhead or a turtle sunning on a log. Unkindled, that flame of the outdoors already flickers within my son, and I'm thrilled to see it.

"Which one do you like best?" I ask him, and he quickly gestures to the 8-point that fell on a September evening in Delaware. It does have rich brown, symmetrical antlers, and Jackie strokes its fur.

"Which one do you like best, Daddy?" he asks.

"I like them all, Son," I reply while walking across the room to the oldest mount on the wall. "But my favorite is this fellow right here."

"Why?" he asks, "because he's the biggest?"

Why? I'm at a loss to explain as I watch my boy's curious hands touch the glistening nose, heavy antlers and gray fur grown to withstand the rigors of a Pennsylvania winter. And as I formulate an answer I remember

back to the cold October morning 12 years earlier that changed my life.

It wasn't until I attended Mansfield University in Tioga County that I started to hunt deer. I had to because in that part of the state no one bothered with small game, and confessing to my new friends that I didn't chase whitetails was akin to admitting an affinity for early morning classes.

Because I had a couple of weeks before grouse season opened, I went with them to Cooper's Sporting Goods Store and bought a used Browning compound bow. I couldn't afford arrows, so friends loaned me some.

I didn't shoot a deer that season, not that anyone really expect me to. In the long run it was, I think, better that way. I was exposed to all the real joys of bowhunting. The fun was just standing around with friends and shooting a bow. The expectation in a crowded pickup cab as "the gang" bounced down a rough Tioga County road, with the world awash in October sunshine and falling golden leaves was special.

I realized I had a lot to learn before I could rightly claim my place as an archery hunter. Shafts that fit and broadheads that matched soon replaced borrowed arrows. I shot from platforms at 3-D courses to learn about elevation, and sent arrows into the vital spots of lifelike deer targets. By my second October I was

By Jack Rodgers



ready, and I got a deer that year.

In the succeeding seasons I scored every fall, some bucks, some does. Each was a trophy, an event to be savored and shared with friends. I would sit next to each downed deer and smooth its fur, examine its hooves and antlers. And that light that now shines in my son's eyes was the same that blazed in mine.

Time has a way of changing things, though. I graduated from college and moved back to the farmland of Berks County. I got married and became a social studies teacher and football coach. I saw my old friends less frequently, and the time spent archery hunting was channeled to other pursuits.

This change in opportunity coincided with a change in my deer hunting outlook. I viewed the local deer population in the developments and cornfields quite differently than those of the laurel-choked hills of Tioga County. That old wonder had been replaced with a pressure to succeed. No longer was it enough to merely hunt, revel in the glorious foliage or have my hands shake when I spotted antlers in the brush. Now, it seemed, I needed to kill a deer for the season to be a success, and I had less time to do that.

The few scouting chances I had time for found me charging around my friend Richard Angstadt's woodlot, frantically scouring its unfamiliar terrain. In my zeal I searched for scrapes, rubs and tracks. My eyes no longer held the same wonder; my spirit no longer lifted to

meet the migrating Canadas overhead. And when the alarm went off on October 8, 1988, I almost didn't get up.

After meeting friends Don Hartman and Bob Ballantyne, we hurried to our locations. Daylight was slow in coming on the overcast morning as I worked my way up an old road to the top of a hill. In my hands I carried a new Jennings compound, as if a new outfit could compensate for the lack of time spent practicing. Hefting its unfamiliar weight,

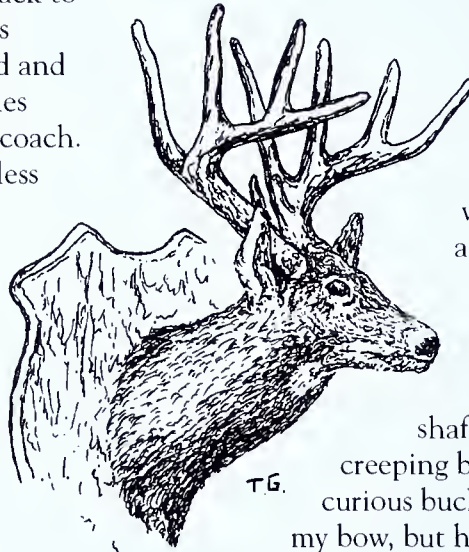
I headed for a rub line I had seen on opening day.

As I crested the hill to a plateau, a buck bounced out, its white antlers bobbing away against a backdrop of pines. I quickly knelt and tried to get an arrow out of the quiver. Nocking the

shaft, I noticed the deer

creeping back towards me. As the curious buck got closer, I drew back my bow, but he bolted and crashed off into the gloom. Disappointment overwhelmed me. I thought this might have been my only chance to get a buck. Remarkably, though, the deer came back again. Circling to get downwind, he walked straight at me. This time he was more cautious, stepping gingerly like a bird dog working a covey of quail. The buck walked right towards me and stopped in thick cover 30 yards away. I awkwardly drew the bow, but he never flinched. The crack the arrow made on impact startled me, and the buck whirled and charged away. I rushed to where he had stood and found my arrow embedded in a poplar sapling. I didn't reflect on my poor decision to shoot or think about the long tracking job that could have resulted. I thought only about losing a chance at a deer.

Dropping down over the knob, I



T.G.

settled into a "dished-out" area laced with rubs and big tracks. We called this spot "The Groundhog Hole," because a deer or hunter entering its gloomy locale disappeared from view like a frightened woodchuck. I settled against a fallen log and waited. The time passed slowly, and I shivered in the unseasonably cold weather.

At 8:30 I thought about finding Don so we could scout for a place to stand that afternoon. I had just shifted in my blowdown when I spotted a gray shape working its way uphill towards me. A deer soon materialized, and although I couldn't see its head, I felt certain from its rectangular shape and sheer size that it probably was a buck. I looked right between its ears where I normally saw the small white antlers of those bucks taken during my college years. These antlers, however, were too wide and too brown to see in the dark hollow, but when the deer turned its head they popped into view.

He was coming, slowly but surely, closer and closer, and if he maintained his present course he would pass 35 to 40 yards away. As he stopped one last time to look down the hill, I drew. The sights wavered along his shoulder. As I searched for an opening, I didn't think about waiting, or whether he was too far, or what would happen if he took a step after I released at that range. Or, not for even an instant, did I think about not shooting. And as the buck threw up those antlers over his shoulders I released.

The deer tore off up the hill, and I knew I had connected. But as his crashing grew more and more distant and eventually faded away, my heart began to sink. Shaking, I went to where I had shot. I found a pile of hair and some

blood, and a pencil-sized sapling cleaved in half by my arrow. The broadhead had deflected and there was no telling where I had struck the deer. A sinking feeling came over me.

Don and Bob soon joined me. The buck bled quite a bit as it traveled uphill, but as the trail continued through a maze of tangles I languished behind the others. I was ashamed, discouraged and disillusioned, and as I neared the end of the brush, I desperately wished for another chance.

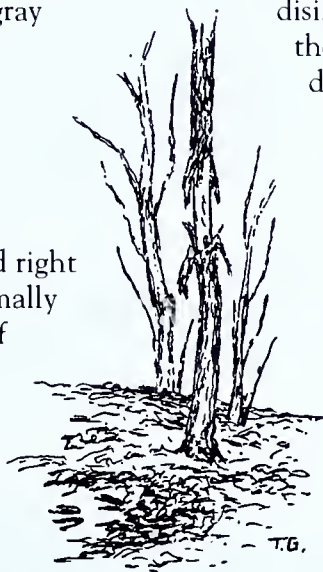
Not knowing why, I turned and veered straight up the hill as if something was guiding me there. Maybe something did. I don't know. But I do know that I looked up and saw the white stomach hair of the deer. It seemed so small in the dark woods, and it took some moments for me to clear my

throat and call the others.

The buck weighed 189 pounds field-dressed, and his 7-point rack has a 20-inch inside spread. The deer's neck was swollen, an early sign of the impending rut, and his teeth were worn.

It's much easier to write about other trophies, to discuss bucks or gobblers or bruins that were taken as a result of much planning, stealth or a well-placed shot. This buck wasn't, really, and it's hard to admit that. But this buck was important because he forced me to get my priorities back in order.

There are those who feel intense pressure to get a deer, and respond by resorting to unethical behavior to do so. Not me, not anymore. That



buck goes with me every time I reach for my bow. He was with me when the other two 8-point bucks on the wall fell to that same Jennings bow. And he was there last fall when I let a beautiful heavy antlered buck walk by at 35 yards. He was broadside, and I'm sure I could have hit him, but I'm not sure where, so I didn't shoot.

I've come full circle. I go out each autumn for those things that really matter, the smell of the fall woods and to be with close friends and family: the mere opportunity to see, hear and enjoy all that is deer

season. I want to tell my son all of these things, and yet, as I clear my throat and glance up into his shiny eyes, I tell him, "Let's just say," reaching up with my own hand to caress the

mount's dark, shiny nose, "that until you get a little older he's my favorite hunting partner."

Jackie accepts this, grins, and wriggles down to the ground and out of my arms. As he races out of the room I watch, half wanting him to grow up quickly, half wanting

him to stay young forever. And

as I follow his footsteps, I pause to take a final look back into the dark eyes of the buck, switch off the light and smile. □

I go out each autumn for those things that really matter, the smell of the fall woods and to be with close friends and family.

Days of Yore



THIS GROUP of York County hunters took these deer in the Pine Grove Furnace area in Cumberland County in 1922. The fellow in the front row on the right is carrying a Winchester Model 1895 carbine (worth more than \$2,000 today). Teddy Roosevelt used a standard Model 1895 rifle in 405-caliber in Africa.

Game Farm Tours

By Carl F. Riegner

Propagation Division Chief

EACH YEAR more than 200,000 ring-necked pheasants are raised at the Game Commission's four game farms and released on state game lands and private properties enrolled in our public access programs. Other birds are distributed to sportsmens organizations that participate in the day-old chick program to raise and release. High schools and organizations conducting embryology and other educational projects are also provided eggs and day-old chicks, accounting for a total distribution of about 240,000 pheasants.

In essence, our pheasant stocking program provides a tangible product for the hunting license buyer, adds diversity to the hunting experience at a time when wild pheasant populations are low, and is a valued service for many people.

Last September, for the third straight year, public tours of our game farms were held to give people a chance to learn more about our pheasant propagation program. Nearly 700 visitors attended demonstration sites, which included pheasant breeder pens, hatchery, brooder house, and observation of birds in rearing and grow-out pens, and they soon gained an understanding of how much work is involved in rais-

ing ring-necked pheasants.

Although the pheasant's production cycle was over for the year, our propagators had saved some pheasant eggs to demonstrate where the hens lay most eggs. Nest boxes are placed in breeder pens to provide cover for the hens during the egg laying process. Eggs are collected four times a day, sanitized and placed in cool storage. In the hatchery, propagators demonstrated how eggs are graded for abnormalities and cracks, which are removed before being placed in incubation trays.

Also, although our brooder houses were empty as well, and all birds had been placed in grow-out pens, propagators set up a brooder ring to show visitors how day-old chicks are placed under electric or gas brooders, with all essential ingredients available such as food and water.

Visitors always ask where all the wild pheasants have gone. Most people simply don't understand how sensitive the ringneck is to its environment. Pheasants thrived best in the Piedmont Region, generally southeastern Pennsylvania. They also flourished in ridge and valley areas, when all habitat components existed to support birds. But, the greater the for-

Hal Korber



EACH GAME FARM can ship between 3,000 to 4,000 pheasants a day. Early in the morning the birds are caught, loaded and sent off to their destination within three hours.

Western Game Farm
Crawford County
25761 Highway 408
Cambridge Springs, PA 16403
Located 3¹/₂ miles east of Cambridge Springs on
Route 408.
This year's tour is scheduled for Sept. 16 from
12 noon to 3 p.m.

Northcentral Game Farm
Lycoming County
1609 Proctor Road
Williamsport, PA 17701
Located 23 miles north of Montoursville off Route
87 in Barbours.
This year's tour is scheduled for Sept. 16 from
12 noon to 3 p.m.

Loyalsock Game Farm
Lycoming County
136 Game Farm Road
Montoursville, PA 17754
Located five miles north of Montoursville on
Route 87.
This year's tour is scheduled for Sept. 16 from
12 noon to 3 p.m.

Southwest Game Farm
Armstrong County
R.D. #1, Box 51-A
New Bethlehem, PA 16242
Located two miles south of New Bethlehem off
routes 66 and 28.
This year's tour is scheduled for Sept. 15 from
12 noon to 3 p.m.

estation, the more sparse birds become.

As the economy drove changes in farming practices, people at the same time wanted a piece of rural living. From the mid-1970s through the early 1980s, housing projects accelerated. Approximately 900,000 acres of farmland — much of it prime pheasant habitat — were lost to urban development. Since the mid-1970s, with the decline of grassland habitats, all wildlife species dependent upon grasslands have followed suit.

Transportation vehicles and crates used for shipping birds were shown at

another site. The release sites are determined according to the game lands system, private property in the Farm-Game Program, and other lands open to public hunting. Each region is then prorated a share of the 200,000 birds based upon the total cultivated acres on those properties and the amount of time hunters spend afield there, from the Game-Take Survey.

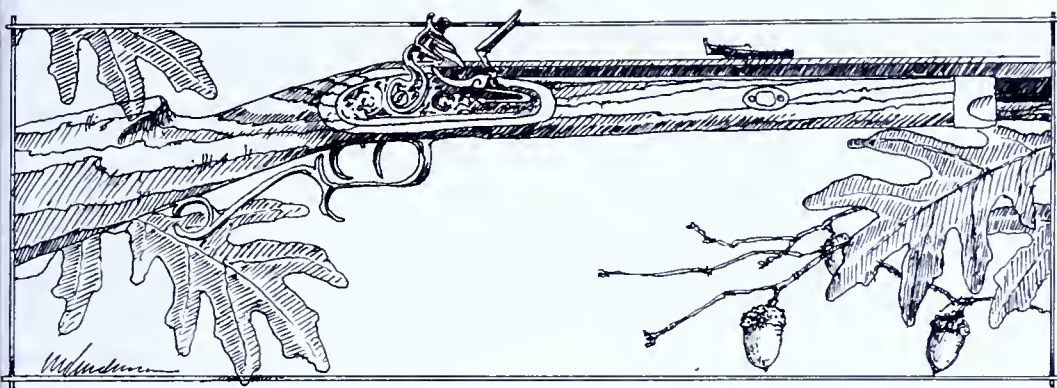
Because hens are not legal game in two-thirds of Pennsylvania, we raise more males than females. Given that birds hatch at a one-to-one ratio, to achieve a greater portion of males, we offer day-old hen chicks for sale to the public. We also provide hatchery run day-old chicks to sportsmens organizations to raise and release in their communities, augmenting our stocking efforts.

In counties where hunters may take only males, about 80 percent of the birds released are roosters. In either sex hunting counties, nearly the reverse percentage is true. Preseason releases consist of 30 percent of the fall allocation, the first two in-season releases are 25 percent, and the

third in-season release consists of 20 percent of the fall allocation.

Last year Armstrong, Blair, Cambria, Huntingdon and Indiana counties were added to those where either-sex pheasant hunting is allowed. Another way we use hens is to reserve a portion for the late small game season, which this year starts on December 10. Pheasant releases, however, will not be conducted until just prior to the Christmas holiday, when many sportsmen, especially youngsters, have time off to enjoy hunting activities.

If you'd like to learn more about our pheasant propagation program, attend a tour this year. □



Early Flintlock Season, The First and the Best

By Dennis Scharadin

TIME was flying by. Almost two days of the 3-day season were over, with only an hour of daylight left, and this was the first time I was stepping into the woods. It seemed everything was stacked against me getting a chance to take my smokepole for a walk during this, the first, early flintlock season.

The post-Christmas flintlock season has been my favorite deer season since I began chasing whitetails with blackpowder during the '70s. News of a flintlock hunt without icicles hanging off my beard and mustache was a pleasant surprise. Just the thought of an October season brought images of bright red, orange and yellow leaves, the smell of pine trees, and not walking through the cold winter woods looking like a Pillsbury doughboy. Finally, the flintlock hunter would have the opportunity to hunt before the deer population was drastically reduced.

I realized the dates, October 21-24, coincided with the annual fall meeting of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writer's Association. A meeting I could not miss due to the fact that it was not only POWA's 50th anniversary, but I was the conference co-

chairman. Hunting on Saturday would be out. Hunting Monday and Tuesday after work would be in. That meant I would be able to hunt until 6:13 each evening, about two hours. What I did not remember was a one hour meeting scheduled after work on Monday. So, my much anticipated early antlerless flintlock season would consist of three hours, plus or minus a few minutes.

Where to hunt was the question. It had to be fairly close — time was short and valuable — and it had to be somewhere where there were deer. Because I had a private land antlerless license, I narrowed it down to a friend's property I had permission to hunt.

I did not have time to spend scouting, but I knew deer were active there. The property, a working farm, is located at the base of Blue Mountain. Part of it is forested and the rest is planted in crops, providing the best of both worlds for whitetails. The section I intended to hunt had been selectively logged that summer, and the landowner had told me that the log-

ger had seen deer every day. Having previously hunted the property, I had some pretty good ideas of where to take a stand.

Most of the remaining trees are big hemlocks with a scattering of oaks and other hardwoods thrown in. The logged section borders on another area that was timbered several years ago and has become overgrown with saplings so close you can barely see through them. But, deer seem to have no problems traveling through them, and they use this regenerated section heavily.

Monday's meeting over, I rushed home, quickly changed, grabbed my gear and gun and headed out to the farm. My plan was to walk a farm road past the fields and up to the section that had been timbered, find a good open spot with some active trails and take a stand. With 45 minutes of hunting time my only hope was that some deer would come off the mountain to feed in the fields.

I began my walk, but no sooner had I stepped on the farm road than a squirrel started chattering so loud that it echoed throughout the valley. It was a plump gray, and if I hadn't had my heart set on venison jerky, it might have become squirrel potpie. I kept weighing the difference as I loaded my Thompson Center.

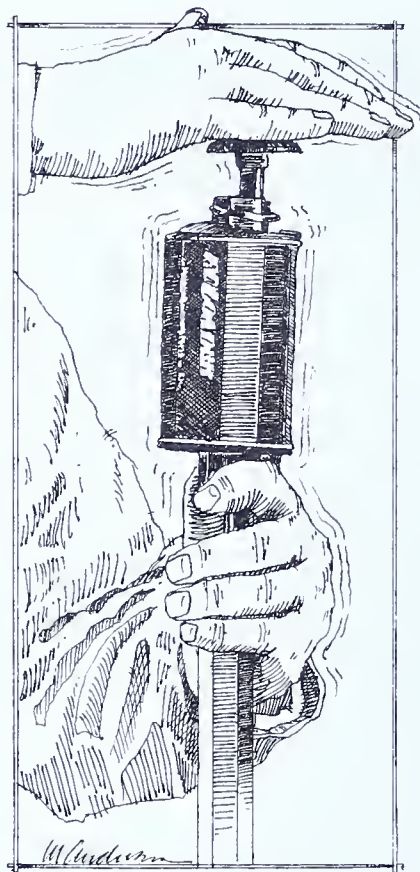
I slowly walked past the squirrel, and as I moved along the road's edge, I kept checking for deer tracks. At least four more squirrels scolded me as

I followed the road up the mountain. The deer sign was not abundant — the only tracks were few and far between, and they were old, but I was committed.

When I reached my "honey hole," I picked a tree for my stand that would provide me cover with good open views both up and down the mountain. There was 40 minutes until closing time, and while they were spent uneventfully, I really enjoyed the balmy weather. The only 4-footed critters to pass my stand were a couple of gray squirrels.

If success was going to come, the red gods were going to have to smile on me sometime during the last two hours of the season, and the lack of fresh sign was not building up my confidence.

Work on Tuesday seemed to last an eternity, but finally it was over, and I was on my way to the farm. I quickly parked my Blazer, hopped out, sprayed myself with a cover scent, grabbed my fanny pack and gun and headed up



the farm road.

As I walked to the stand there was no fresh sign and, thankfully, no scolding squirrels to break the silence. Deciding I would be less noticeable seated, I made myself comfortable and leaned back against a tree.

The woods was quiet, the only sounds being the chirping of birds and, in the far distance, a barking dog. The temperature was in the 70s, and the sun was shining down through the remaining trees. I took several deep breaths, soaking in the forest smells. I was becoming more and more re-

laxed, my eyelids becoming heavier and heavier. It seemed all the stresses of the conference and work were seeping out of my pores. Slowly, my eyelids closed.

The sound of crunching leaves jolted my eyes open, and I slowly moved the 50-caliber flintlock to my knee. As the sound got closer I strained my eyes for any movement. And then it appeared — another gray squirrel. It ran to a log 10 feet away, stood up and stared directly at me.

in that ground-eating gait whitetails have. They were does, one following the other, and they would pass by at about 40 yards.

I squeezed the set trigger and carefully slid my finger onto the front trigger. Now was not the time for a misfire. Looking down the sights, I turned the doe's shoulder into a "lollipop" and placed it on the front sight. Both deer appeared to be on a mission and paid no attention to me. It was the moment of truth. The lead doe was as close as she would get. Do it now, I thought.

The quiet was shattered and a cloud of smoke billowed between the deer and me, blocking my view. I stared in their direction, trying to pick up motion. One deer was running back up the mountain, but

where was the second? I was trying to look everywhere at once, but all I could see was that cloud of smoke. Seeing no deer, I dropped to one knee to look under the cloud. There she was, lying where she fell, motionless.

A hundred thoughts flooded my mind: Is she dead? Should I reload? Will she jump to her feet and run off? Keeping my eyes on the motionless doe and trying to slow my breathing, I fumbled my way through a reload. As simple as an EC-Loader is to use, it just would not line up with the barrel. Finally, it did and the gun was loaded. I walked to the deer, and discovered that it was stone dead. The shot had gone through the top of the shoulder, hitting the spine, killing it instantly. As I was filling out my tag I noticed it was 5:48, 25 minutes before the end of the season.

My first flintlock deer had just been taken in the first early flintlock antlerless deer season during the prettiest time of the year to be in the woods. What could have been better? □

During the new October 13-20 flintlock antlerless deer season, muzzleloader hunters are required to display the same 250 square inches of fluorescent orange required of hunters during the regular firearms deer season. An antlerless deer license, along with a muzzleloader license, is required.

After what seemed like an eternity, it hopped of the log, grabbed an acorn and scurried on its way.

Taking a deep breath to clear away the cobwebs, I slowly stood up and walked up the mountain to another large tree about 50 yards away. Glancing at my watch, I decided to spend the last 43 minutes of the season standing, watching, and wide awake.

Normally, the woods comes alive the hour before dusk. Daytime animals are trying to find the one last snack, and nighttime animals are trying to catch their breakfast. That was not happening now; even the birds had stopped singing.

Then it happened: the sound of animals running down from the chopoff. Deer, two of them, too far to tell what they were, but close enough to definitely identify them as deer. Slowly, I raised my rifle, pulling the hammer to full cock, so the deer would not hear its click.

They were coming closer, not running but not walking, either. Just moving along

Almost a Statistic

By Freddie McKnight

THE PHONE call was one I had been expecting. Due to rain and wind, the boys' soccer practice had been canceled, so I would be able to slip out for the last couple of hours on this, the second day of archery season. With only a few minutes before my wife would be home from work, I scrambled to assemble my gear, and was loading the last bit into the truck when my wife pulled into the driveway. I gave her a quick kiss and hurried off. Little did I know it almost was the last time I would see her and the kids.

I was going to a new location I had found during some post season scouting the previous winter. It was less than 200 yards off a state forest road. A point off a narrow ridge next to a clearcut formed a funnel of sorts for all deer heading to some farms across the creek. It had been a dry year, so the deer were using the trail to get to water and feed. I was quite anxious to get in the tree I had picked. The wet leaves made the approach a silent one, and the wind was blowing right into the point of the ridge. It doesn't get any better than this, I thought.

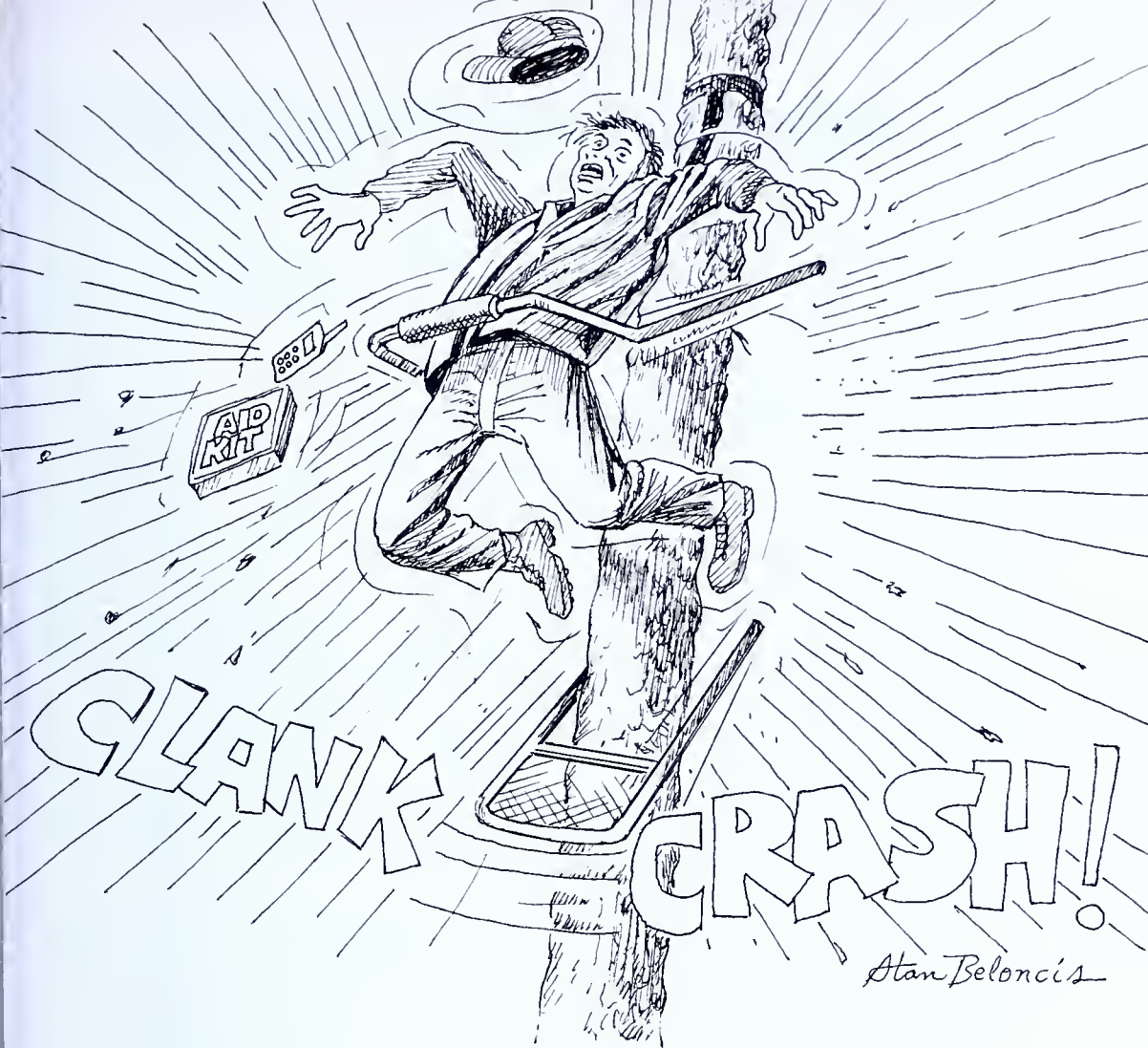
I hurriedly attached my portable climbing stand on the tree and tied my bow to the pull rope. I propped my bow on a stump next to the tree with the nocks pointing up, so no dirt would get in them, and then I climbed aboard the platform for my ascent up the popular tree. For some reason, probably just to save time, I put my safety rope on a belt loop, not around the tree. I was just about at the height where I wanted to be when the unexpected happened:

I hit an unseen knot on the back side of the tree. The next sound I heard was the clanking of metal as the platform portion of my stand fell 20 feet to the ground, leaving me hanging on to the climber with my elbows.

Panic gripped me. I made the mistake of looking down and noticed the bright nocks on my arrows. I could only imagine being impaled on the nocks after falling from this height. I was in a self-made predicament, and one I was not sure I could get out of.

For some reason I kept staring at my watch. Why, I'm not sure, but after hanging on for my life for eight minutes, I knew I'd have to gather strength from within to get out of this peril. After saying a prayer to the Man upstairs, I forced myself to settle down and figure a way out.

As a volunteer fireman in a small rural community, I've dealt with emergency situations involving close friends and family. I was able to fall back on those experiences to keep my fear in check and instill confidence in what I was about to do. If I could get my safety rope around the tree and then attach it to my harness, I knew at least I would not fall. Putting all my faith in holding on with just my left hand, I unbuckled the clip from my belt loop and got the rope around the tree. Once that was done, I had to figure out how to get the clip attached to the loop of my harness in the middle of my back. To do so, I had to get rid of my fanny pack, because it was holding the loop down. That was a tough decision, though, because it held my knife, cell phone, first-aid kit, and a host of other items that could come in handy once I got tied in and secured. It fell to the ground, though, leaving me with the knowledge that now I



couldn't even call for help. I then managed to wiggle around and get the safety harness attached. I sighed with relief, as the worst was over — or so I thought.

I figured I could pull myself up on the climbing portion of my stand and either rig up a way to descend or wait for help. I was not real happy with the second option, because no one knew where I was. I tried to pull myself up, but it was hopeless because of the wet rope and my tired muscles. I'm in relatively decent shape, but by that time I was exhausted. I held on to the climber and tree as long as I could, but my arms and legs felt like rubber and started shaking like mad. I had worked up quite a sweat and also had been soaked by the now heavier rain. Hypothermia was setting in,

and I found myself once again in a bad situation.

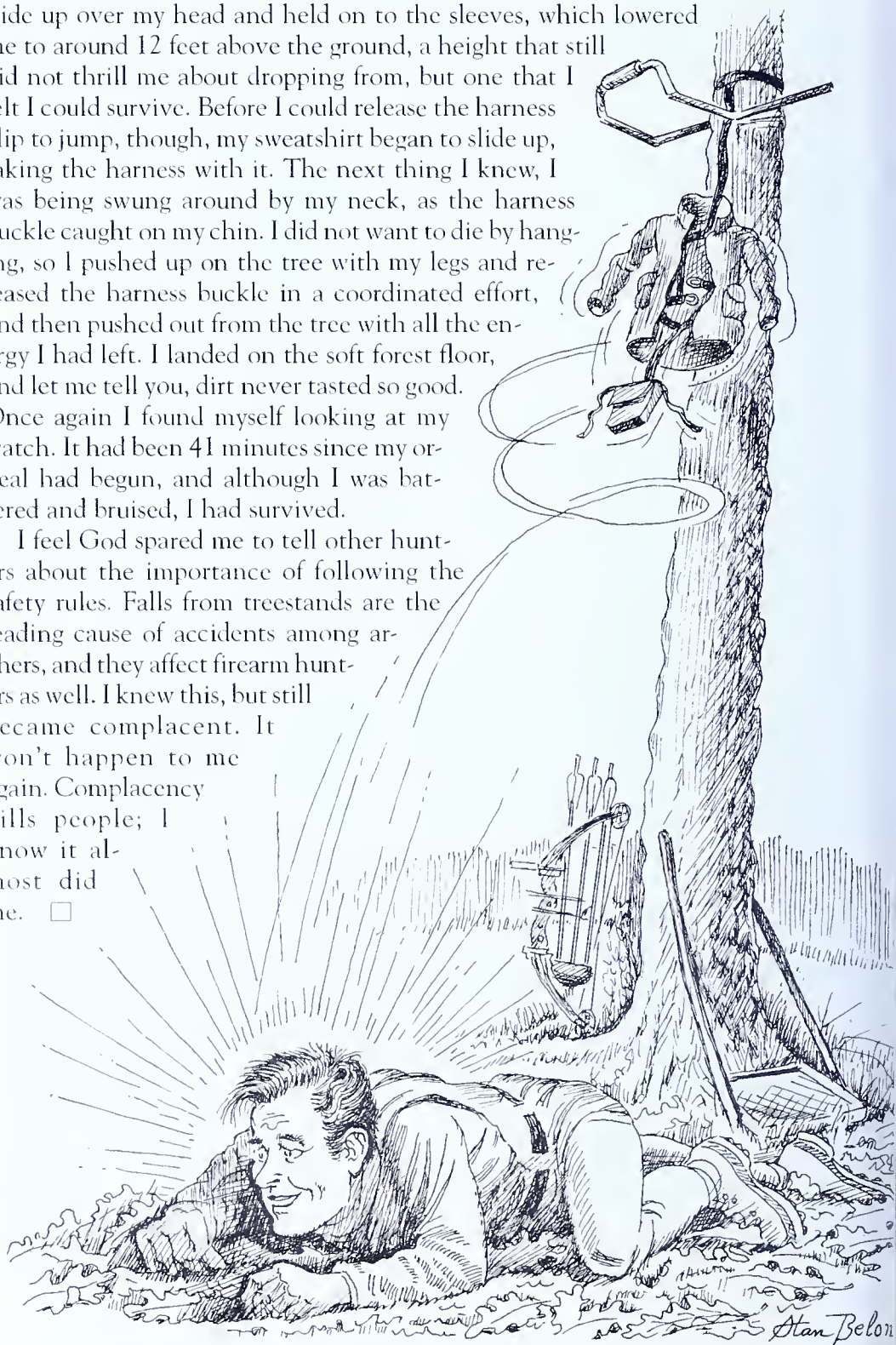
I could no longer hold on and figured that hanging by the safety belt might give me a chance to build up my energy to try something else, so I let go of the climber. Bad idea. The harness began suffocating me, and after a few minutes I was gasping for breath and nearly losing consciousness. Fighting with every last ounce of strength I had, I desperately tried to get back to the climber, but to no avail.

Knowing that time was running out, I said another prayer, only this time asking for a quick death. I resigned myself to the fact that my num-

ber was up, but then I thought about how my family would ever get along without me. I was not going to be there for many special events in their lives because of my stupidity in not taking a minute to harness up before climbing the tree. Emotionally, with all these thoughts flashing through my mind, I was a wreck, and I'm not even sure I was completely aware of what was happening.

I wear my safety harness underneath my jacket, to keep it from catching on the bowstring, and due to the moisture, the jacket began sliding. My safety rope was about eight feet long, and I came up with a last-ditch idea. I allowed the jacket to slide up over my head and held on to the sleeves, which lowered me to around 12 feet above the ground, a height that still did not thrill me about dropping from, but one that I felt I could survive. Before I could release the harness clip to jump, though, my sweatshirt began to slide up, taking the harness with it. The next thing I knew, I was being swung around by my neck, as the harness buckle caught on my chin. I did not want to die by hanging, so I pushed up on the tree with my legs and released the harness buckle in a coordinated effort, and then pushed out from the tree with all the energy I had left. I landed on the soft forest floor, and let me tell you, dirt never tasted so good. Once again I found myself looking at my watch. It had been 41 minutes since my ordeal had begun, and although I was battered and bruised, I had survived.

I feel God spared me to tell other hunters about the importance of following the safety rules. Falls from treestands are the leading cause of accidents among archers, and they affect firearm hunters as well. I knew this, but still became complacent. It won't happen to me again. Complacency kills people; I know it almost did me. ☐



Counting Deer

By Christopher S. Rosenberry, PhD

PGC Wildlife Biometrician

HOW MANY DEER live in Pennsylvania? How many deer do hunters harvest each year? These two questions generate a lot of discussion among hunters and nonhunters alike. Biologists, farmers, motorists and countless others wonder about these questions. Unfortunately, estimating deer populations and harvests is not simple, nor without controversy. Each year the Game Commission calculates deer harvests, and then from these, population estimates. Although many factors influence the confusion and controversy surrounding these estimates, perspective and uncertainty are probably most responsible.

Perspective

Just as three important words in business are “location, location, location,” three important words when discussing deer populations are “perspective, perspective, perspective.” A person’s perspective, or viewpoint, is often the foundation for their thoughts on deer population estimates. Hunters often base their estimates on what they see where they hunt. Farmers may base their deer population esti-

mates on the number they see in their fields. Game Commission biologists base their estimate on data collected at the county and state levels.

Each person’s perspective influences his or her deer population estimate, and the three may not agree. The hunter who sees only a few deer during the season is likely to conclude that deer populations have dropped. A farmer who has just watched a dozen deer graze across his soybean field may conclude that deer populations are increasing. Finally, a biologist may be looking at data that indicates the population is stable. In each case, there are limits to a person’s perspective.

How deer are distributed also affects a person’s view of deer populations. Deer are not uniformly distributed across the landscape. Some areas will have higher deer numbers than others. Location of food and suitable habitat, as well as hunting pressure, influences the number of deer in any given area. Differences between high and low populations may not be quickly corrected by deer moving from high to low population areas. Deer typically do not “flow” across the landscape. In fact, social structure and behavior

Larissa Rose



EACH YEAR at butcher shops and during field checks, Game Commission personnel examine more than 50,000 deer. Reporting rates are then calculated by crosschecking this data and report cards.

ior may actually inhibit deer movements into new areas.

For deer, the basic social unit is the maternal family group consisting of an adult doe, her fawns and, possibly, older female offspring. One way to explain deer social units is called the "rose petal hypothesis." This hypothesis states that an adult doe's home range forms the center of a rose and her female offsprings' home ranges will form petals of the rose. If deer are greatly reduced in one area, female deer will not usually leave their "flower" of home ranges to move into the vacated areas.

Recall the hunter, farmer and biologist with differing views on deer populations. Who is right? In reality, each may be right. Deer populations where the hunter spends much of his time may be lower than deer on the farmer's land. Based on data from a combination of areas similar to where the hunter and farmer are seeing deer, the biologist's assessment of a stable population also is possible. Biologists also could give different answers based

upon perspective. For example, if asked what has happened to deer populations during the last 10 years," two different, but correct answers could be given. If asked about statewide deer populations, the answer would be that the population has increased from about 1,200,000 in 1990 to about 1,500,000 in 2000. But, if asked about a specific county, the answer might be that the population increased, decreased or remained the same.

The Game Commission evaluates deer populations on a broader scale than most people, yet even if hunters, farmers and others agreed to discuss deer populations at only county and state levels, confusion and controversy would remain because of uncertainty.

Uncertainty

Estimates versus "real" numbers. Given a choice, most people, including biologists, will choose to have actual numbers. For deer harvests and populations in Pennsylvania, however, we have no choice but to use estimates, even though there's always a degree of uncertainty associated with them.

Figure 1. Comparison of statewide deer harvests based upon reporting rates (Estimated Harvest) and statewide deer harvests from the annual Game Take Survey (Game Take Harvest), 1990-2000.

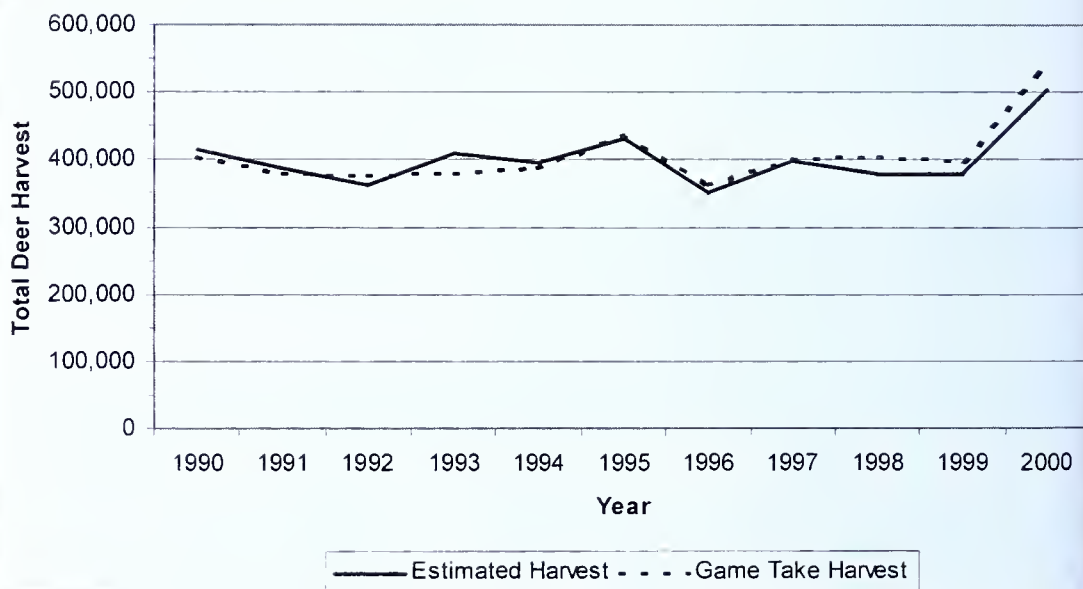
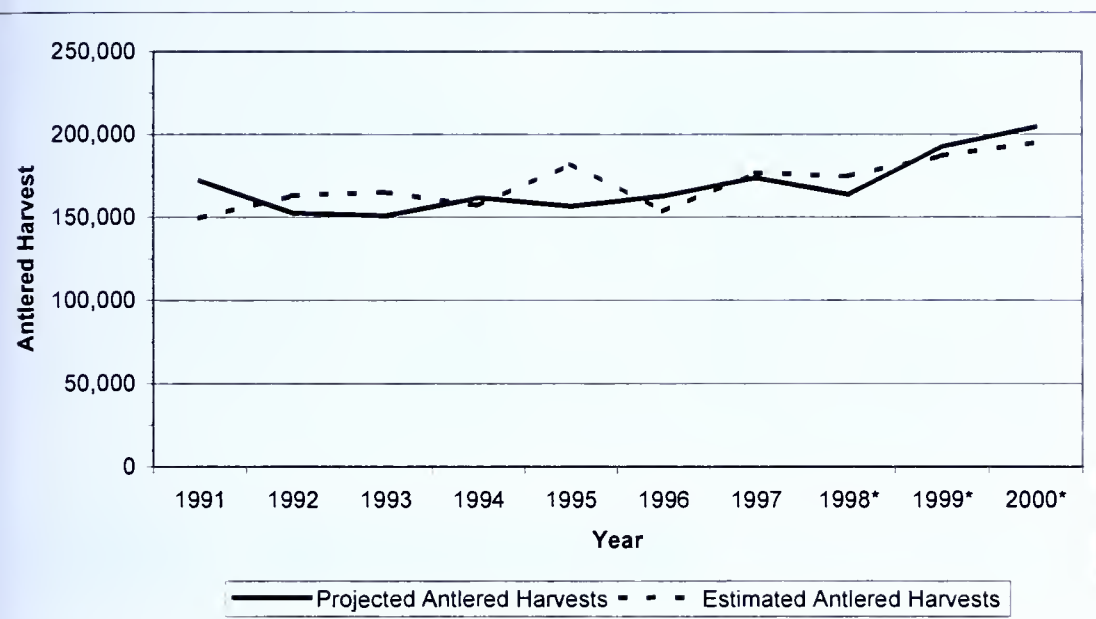


Figure 2. Comparison of projected antlered harvest and estimated antlered harvest, 1991-2000. Projected antlered harvests are calculated in March of each year using Pennsylvania's deer population model. Estimated antlered harvests are calculated a year later, following the hunting seasons, using report cards and data collected from more than 50,000 deer field checked by Game Commission biologists and other personnel.
 * indicates that Special Regulation counties are not included in these years.



We cannot monitor the harvest of every deer hunter. Rather, we rely upon those who do get a deer to report it. And because not every hunter who gets a deer sends in a report card, we must estimate harvests based upon reporting rates (the percentage of deer that are reported). Each year at butcher shops and during field checks, Game Commission biologists, conservation officers and foresters examine more than 50,000 deer. Reporting rates are then calculated by crosschecking this data and report cards.

We also do not know exactly how many deer live in a given area, especially an area the size of Pennsylvania. Because we cannot count every deer, we estimate the population, which — like any estimate — has a degree of uncertainty.

How good are our estimates?

Although it is not possible to directly compare a deer population estimate with the actual number (the actual number is unknown), it is possible to evaluate an es-

timate with other estimates derived in different ways.

Deer harvests estimated from report card reporting rates, for example, can be compared to deer harvest estimates from the annual Game Take Survey. For this survey, a random sample of Pennsylvania hunters reports the number of animals harvested for numerous species. Based upon these responses, annual statewide harvest estimates are calculated. Over the last decade, deer harvest estimates based on reporting rates and those based on Game Take Survey results are very similar (Figure 1). On average, these two estimates, each based on entirely separate data, are within four percent of each other. Such similarity of independent estimates strongly suggests that deer harvests based on reporting rates are accurate.

If deer harvest estimates appear credible, how about deer population estimates? One way of evaluating deer

population estimates is to compare projected antlered harvests with the estimated antlered harvests. Each spring, from harvest and field data, the Game Commission estimates huntable deer populations. Because population estimates are derived from harvest data, deer in unhuntable areas (urban/suburban areas) are not included. Based upon population estimates, a projection is made of what the antlered harvest for the upcoming fall hunting season will be.

Between 1991 and 2000, projected antlered harvests differ from harvests (calculated after the hunting seasons) by only about seven percent (Figure 2). Such similarity between before and after the season harvest estimates suggests that deer population estimating technique closely reflects the true statewide deer population. Here it's

important to remember perspective. Just because the statewide deer population estimate appears reasonable, this does not imply the population estimate accurately reflects changes in a deer population in a small local area, such as a state game lands or farm.

Nobody will ever be able to say exactly how many deer live in or are harvested in Pennsylvania. Our methods of estimating harvests and populations, however, appear reasonable and are based on data collected from hunters and deer.

Regardless of technological advances, estimating deer harvests and populations is likely to remain controversial. Uncertainty is an inherent part of estimating wildlife harvests and populations and cannot be avoided, but the Game Commission will continue to use the most efficient techniques available for estimating deer harvests and populations. □

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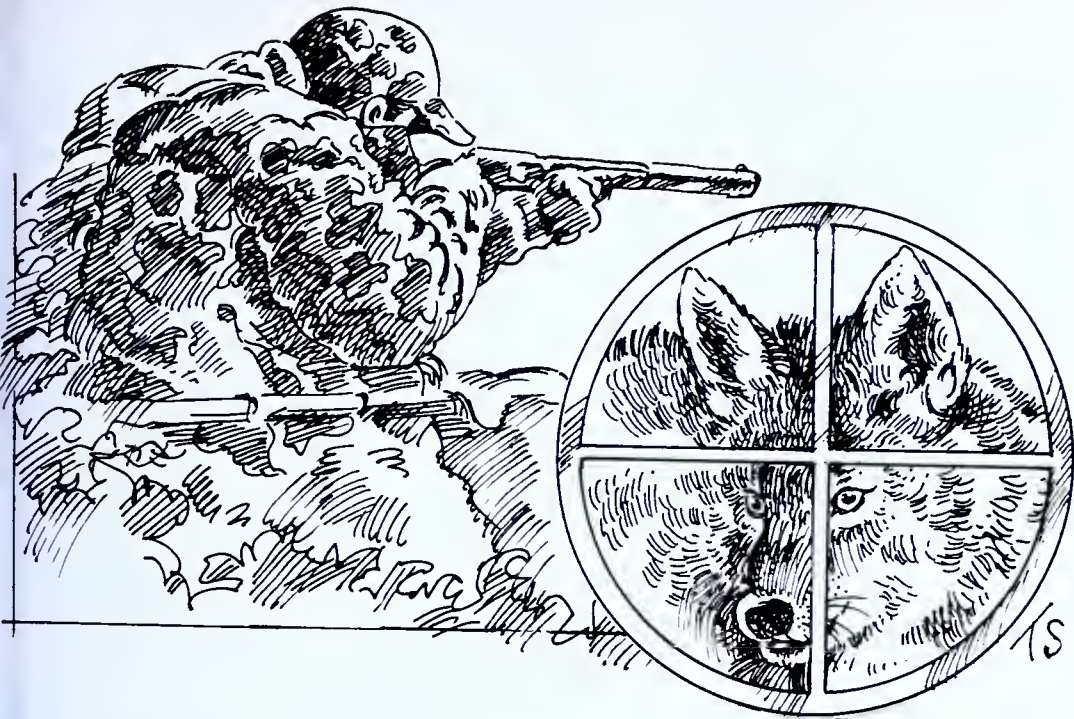
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Our Keenest Predator

By Robert S. Balhatchet

IT'S SAID the number one predator in Pennsylvania has eyesight keener than the wild turkey, can spot hunter movement from 250 yards away, and can hear a mouse chewing 20 yards away; but what usually keeps it alive is its long, slender nose, which enables it to detect humans three-quarters of a mile away.

The keen senses of the coyote make it a difficult quarry indeed, but one hunter has mastered a system for taking coyotes with consistency. Tom Bechdel took 62 coyotes, including nine with the bow, during a recent 18-month period.

"When I first started calling coyotes," Tom said, "my success was limited. I read about them and talked to wildlife biologists, and one detail of a coyote's daily routine caught my attention: Late in the afternoon they usually feed within their first

hour of hunting. I reasoned that if I could locate their bedding area, there was a reasonable chance they would be there the next day and I could call them in."

Putting his theory to the test in the mountains around his home, Tom used his mechanical caller and was encouraged by the large number of coyotes that answered his calls over a three and a half month period. Using his technique of going back the next day to hunt, Tom estimated he had more than 200 coyote sightings. "All of my scouting and calling is done within 35 miles of my home," Tom said. "None of my calling is at night; I call only during the last two hours of daylight."

Describing his locator calling, Tom emphasized the importance of using a

notebook to record the direction from which coyotes responded, noting roads and prominent landmarks, weather conditions and wind direction. "Wind direction is especially important," said Tom, "because that will determine how you'll set up the next day to hunt that particular animal."

Predator hunters use a coyote call to provoke a response. Johnny Stewart and Burnham Brothers have coyote tapes, while Knight & Hale makes a powerful siren tape that will catch any coyote's attention.

Where roads lead into a potential coyote area, you can hike in and call to coyotes. The distance a person travels between stops is determined by terrain. When you are calling in open country, you may go a mile or so before calling again, but in hilly, wooded territory, you may have to call more frequently.

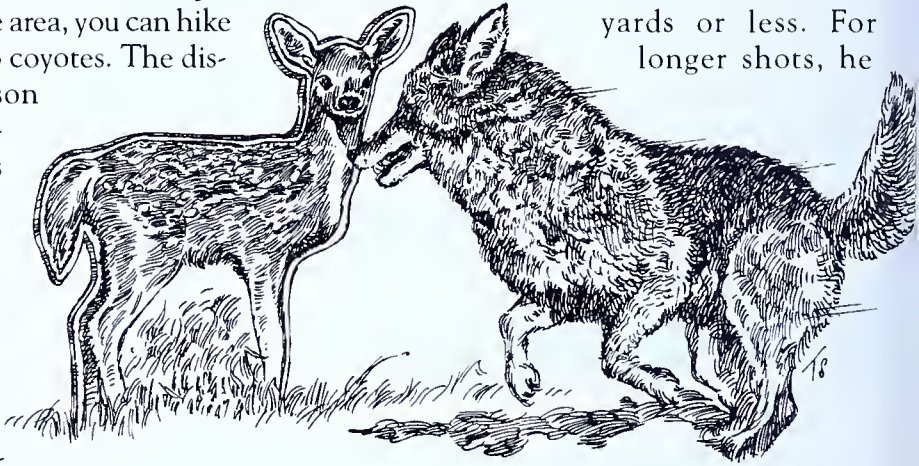
"The biggest mistake hunters make when trying to call a coyote is not paying attention to details," said Bechdel. "I use complete camo. That means full facemask, covering my boots with a camo cloth and, of course, my firearms and bow are camouflaged. I sit on a small folding chair that gets me 17 inches off the ground. When you consider that a coyote is even more sensitive than a deer to a human presence, you have to take every precaution."

Tom also feels using a decoy to draw attention away from the caller is important. Due to a coyote bite that produces 2,240 pounds of pressure per square inch, the animals have mangled a half dozen of his furry toy rabbits.

Often, it's at that moment that Tom can raise his firearm or bow to shoot at a stationary animal.

Another decoy that is effective in conjunction with a fawn bleat call is a folding composition fawn. The fawn decoy offers several advantages: it is larger, so it's more easily seen, it's light and it can be sprinkled with deer scent. This combination can be especially deadly in the late season, when much of the coyote's other table fare is snoozing underground.

As for firearms, Tom usually uses a 20-gauge shotgun with No. 6 shot, because most of his shots are 20 yards or less. For longer shots, he



prefers a .22 Magnum rifle. No matter what he's using, though, Tom always shoots for the shoulder, so he can anchor the animal where it stands.

Tom uses his predator call for a half minute or so, then waits about another minute before calling again. Although most coyotes within hearing distance will respond to calling within five minutes, Bechdel calls for at least 20. "Then I just put my head back against a tree and stay still for about 10 minutes. I've taken many coyotes during that last 10 minutes. The terrain can dictate how long the caller should remain on stand as well. In mountainous country with long hollows, it takes a predator longer to arrive. If the coyote is making its way through brushy country, it also takes longer."

Experienced predator callers know that

the type of prey is also a determining factor in deciding how long to remain on stand. For instance, because a bobcat coming to the sound of a dying rabbit continues hunting all the way in, some callers for them stay on stand for an hour. On the other hand, the gray fox — small but aggressive — usually runs right in. Some callers suspect that in the suburban East, coyotes have become more cautious, and thus, need to work harder and longer to bring them in range.

Because calling in cold winter weather is so much more effective, Tom stresses layering your garments for warmth, yet not wearing so many clothes that you can't maneuver your gun or bow. He uses heat pads in his gloves and boots. Heat pads can also be used to keep your electronic caller functioning in below zero weather. When the sound from your caller noticeably slows down, you know the cold is affecting the machine. In transit, your call should be kept near the heater in your vehicle. Mouth calls can be affected by the cold as well. They should be kept in an inner pocket or a pocket with a heat pack. Experienced callers know that in winter, coyotes begin hunting in packs, enabling them to bring down larger animals.

An analysis of 300 scats examined during the winter here in Pennsylvania indicate that coyotes eat a variety of food items, but mice and small mammals are their main prey. Mammals of some 13 species were identified in the scat, with deer occurring in 57 percent of the scats studied. It must be noted, though, that roadkilled deer are easy pickings for coyotes, as are deer that have starved to death. Next on the list were rabbits and woodchucks. Birds were found in 10 percent of scat and insects in 18 percent. Surprisingly, plant material occurred in 50 percent of the scat examined. Various kinds of fruits are important during late summer and fall, but plant material appears to be an important element of the diet year-round. Around urban areas, cats and small dogs are not safe, either.



Coyotes are found throughout Pennsylvania but are more numerous in the northern half of the state. In 1990, the coyote population was estimated at 15,000 to 20,000, and it has continued to expand. The coyote harvest then exceeded 6,000, with half being taken incidental to turkey, deer and bear hunting. Mortality from hunting and trapping approaches 60 percent for young coyotes, but only 15 percent for adults.

"When coyotes live in proximity to man, they can be a threat to humans as well," Tom said. He mentions an attack in Los Angeles where a coyote jumped a 6½-foot retaining wall and ran more than 300 feet into an urban backyard to kill a 3-year-old girl. Other coyote attacks have been documented around the country.

"If I had the opportunity to take the last coyote, I wouldn't do it," Tom said. "We only need to keep their numbers at a level where they are not a problem. Fortunately, it's only one or two percent of the coyote population that poses a problem."

Tom believes if you harvest a coyote, you've taken the number one predator in the East. I agree. □



PA Elk Hunts: 1920s Style

By Larissa Rose
PGC Information Writer

THIS YEAR, Pennsylvania will have its first elk hunt since 1931. Most people hoping for a chance to participate in the hunt weren't even alive then. One person who is applying for a license, however, has already had a chance to legally shoot an elk in Pennsylvania.

Arnold Giovanini, who turned 91 on May 14, was 14 when his grandfather took him hunting during the state's second elk season, in 1924. "I found a set of tracks and followed them until I saw an eight point," Arnold said of the only elk he saw that day. "He was eating the buds off a devil's club — that was the only food there was for him." Arnold ran off to find his granddad and brought him back to where the elk was still eating. But he didn't shoot him. Why? "Because Granddad said, 'If we shoot it, how we gonna get it out?'"

For that reason, Arnold passed up the bull, but he didn't go home empty-handed that day.

"I saw two bear cubs, one deer and one elk that I could have shot," he

said, "but I just shot a buck and came home."

The oldest of four children, Giovanini always enjoyed hunting. His father died at 32, when the flu epidemic hit in 1918, so his grandfather took him hunting. "I've hunted two weeks every year," he said. "I always kept all my vacation time for deer season."

Arnold was born in 1910 in Clymer, Indiana County, where his father was a miner. His mother was worried by all the mining accidents, however, and in 1915 the family moved to Weedville in Elk County. After his father died, his mother moved the family to Dents Run, which was then known as Wilmer.

At age 28, Arnold was drafted in the first round of World War II, but was injured in a tank accident at Fort Knox. After spending several months in the hospital there, he was discharged and returned home. After getting back home from Fort Knox, Giovanini went to a dance in Benzette, and that's where he met his wife, Elizabeth. Before and after the war, Arnold worked in the coal mines — a total of 21 years — and then went to work for Key-

stone Carbon in St. Marys, where he retired after 30 years.

Arnold enjoys the outdoors and seeing the elk, and he still loves to hunt. Four years ago, the last time he got a buck, he fell and broke his ankle, so he missed hunting a couple years. But last year he was back at it, and took home a grouse and a ringneck. Throughout his long hunting career, Arnold has seen and taken many animals. In 1950, he took a bear, a turkey and a 216-pound 8-point buck, each on the opening day! While some people hunt their entire lives and never take a bear, Arnold has bagged four, the last being a 125-pounder in 1982. When people ask about the secret to his success, he merely replies, "I know where to hunt for them."

Arnold, it seems, would be a good one to ask where to hunt for just about anything. He has had both of his eyes operated on, so he doesn't have to wear glasses all of the time, and uses his improved vision to scout for game. "I see elk every day. I put lots of miles on my car," he says with a smile. But Arnold also puts in a lot of miles on foot. "I do all the walking, and I can't find a darn set of horns!"

While lots of residents in the heart of Pennsylvania's elk range have an opinion about the elk and the decision to hunt them, no one has the voice of experience like Arnold Giovanini. "I'm glad we're going to hunt them," he says. "They don't have the food they used to." And he should

know, as he has seen the land allow for the support, demise and then resurgence of elk in Pennsylvania. That elk season 77 years ago was the only time Arnold hunted elk. "Not many people in the area hunted the things,"

he said. "Mostly it was people that came in on the train from all over."

One of those who came in on the train now lives less than half an hour from Arnold, in Ridgway. Louie Morelli, another 91-year-old who has memories of hunting in the Dents Run area of Elk County, grew up in Armstrong County. "We'd take the B&O (Railroad) from Kittanning to DuBois," he recalls. "Then the Pennsy to Dents Run." But that's all the farther the train went. From Dents Run they had to take the "hootlebug," a little car that shuttled hunters to the lodges. There were several lodges (or boarding houses) in

the area that put up hunters during the season. And they always filled. "You had to make reservations in the summer for that winter," Louie said of the boarding house in Dents Run where they stayed.

Growing up, Louie had two brothers and two sisters, but for awhile, their family seemed a little larger. When the mother of a family that was close to Louie's died of the flu in 1918, the father and four sons moved in with Louie's family. After a time, however,



Larissa Rose

Ninety-one-year-old ARNOLD GIOVININI hunted elk during Pennsylvania's second season in 1924. Now he'd like a chance to take part in PA's first elk hunt in 70 years.



In 1928, (L TO R) Ben Gatto, Maude Serafini, Frank Morelli, LOUIE MORELLI, Jake Bolatti, Frankie Esordi, and an unknown hunter posed in front of three bucks and Archie Lavazar's 13-point elk taken in Dents Run.

the father and his sons moved to Detroit. One summer, Louie decided to run away to visit his buddies in Michigan. While there, he met Archie Lavazar, who Louie says was a "businessman." Archie took Louie and his buddies to baseball games. "I wasn't used to being around someone with so much money," Louie said. "I was in no hurry to get back home." But he did return home, and a few years later, Archie wanted to come to Pennsylvania to hunt for elk.

Louie had always been a bird hunter, but his uncle introduced him to big game. In 1926, Louie's uncle and a friend, Silvio Benini, went to Elk County and each got an elk. The next year, Louie went to Dents Run to hunt for deer, and ended up getting the biggest buck of his life. That year, he stayed in a boarding house owned by the Biondi family. One of the Biondi's sons, Art, later became a game warden. When Louie shot his buck, he was by himself, far from the house and didn't even have a knife to dress the deer. A hunter happened by who built a fire and went to find Louie's uncle. He later returned with a mule and a stone boat, which they put the deer

on to get it out of the woods.

Although Louie hunted in Dents Run for several years, 1928 was the only year that he hunted for elk. That year, Archie Lavazar accompanied the hunting party. When Louie went to Dents Run during the summer of '28 to make their reservations for hunting season, he asked Cucino, "a little Italian guy," to look for elk for Archie to shoot. "I told Cucino that if Mr. Lavazar got an elk, he would make it worth his while," Louie told me as he rubbed his thumb and forefinger together — the universal

sign for money. When hunting season rolled around, Louie, his uncle and five others hopped on the B&O and headed to Elk County. Archie came by car and met them at Dents Run.

On the first day of the season, Louie; his sister's father-in-law, Mr. Ben Gatto; and Archie headed out together, but didn't see a single elk. The second day, however, Cucino came through with a tip. "He told us to get our eight guys together to make a couple drives," Louie said. "So we headed up to Cherry Point Flat, which was a tram road." Cucino took three of the guys with him to help drive, and left the rest lined up on the tram road. "Archie started out pretty far away from me, but after 15 or 20 minutes, he was right up beside me," Louie said. "He was so excited." Not five minutes later, elk appeared. "They came off this flat. There were two bulls and three cows coming right for us," Louie said. "I'm still not sure why, but I told Archie to shoot first." He shot and a big bull dropped, "just like they hit him on the head with a cleaver," according to Louie. The bullet went through the right eye and came out the back of its head and loosened its horns up, so they had to drag the bull out using a rope around its neck. About 150 yards from them, another member of their party, a

doctor from Franklin, dropped the second bull, a 10-point. Archie's, however, was a massive 13-point. A problem arose, though, when they took the elk back to camp. The owner of the boarding house they were staying in was owned by a game warden named Armondo, who told Archie that he couldn't take the elk back to Michigan. Apparently, on his drive to Wilmer, he stopped in Kittanning and bought a resident — not nonresident — license. The game warden did, however, say that the head could be mounted and taken back to Detroit, but the meat had to stay in Pennsylvania. So they took the elk to a taxidermist in Clearfield who mounted the 13-point for free, because it was the biggest brought in that year.

A year or two later, Louie returned to Dents Run for deer season and got his first doe. Twelve of them made the trip in a moving van, which turned out to be too big to cross the mining tippie into Wilmer. So they had to walk the rest of the way. As they were walking across an open field where there was a local swimming pool, they saw a 6-point elk on the ice. "The kids had chased him out of town and onto the pool," Louie said, "and his legs were splayed out on the ice." Louie's uncle climbed onto its back to put a rope around its antlers and they pulled the animal off of the ice. "He just lay there and wouldn't move," Louie said. "On the first day of the season, we found him dead on the path, and someone had taken his ivory teeth."

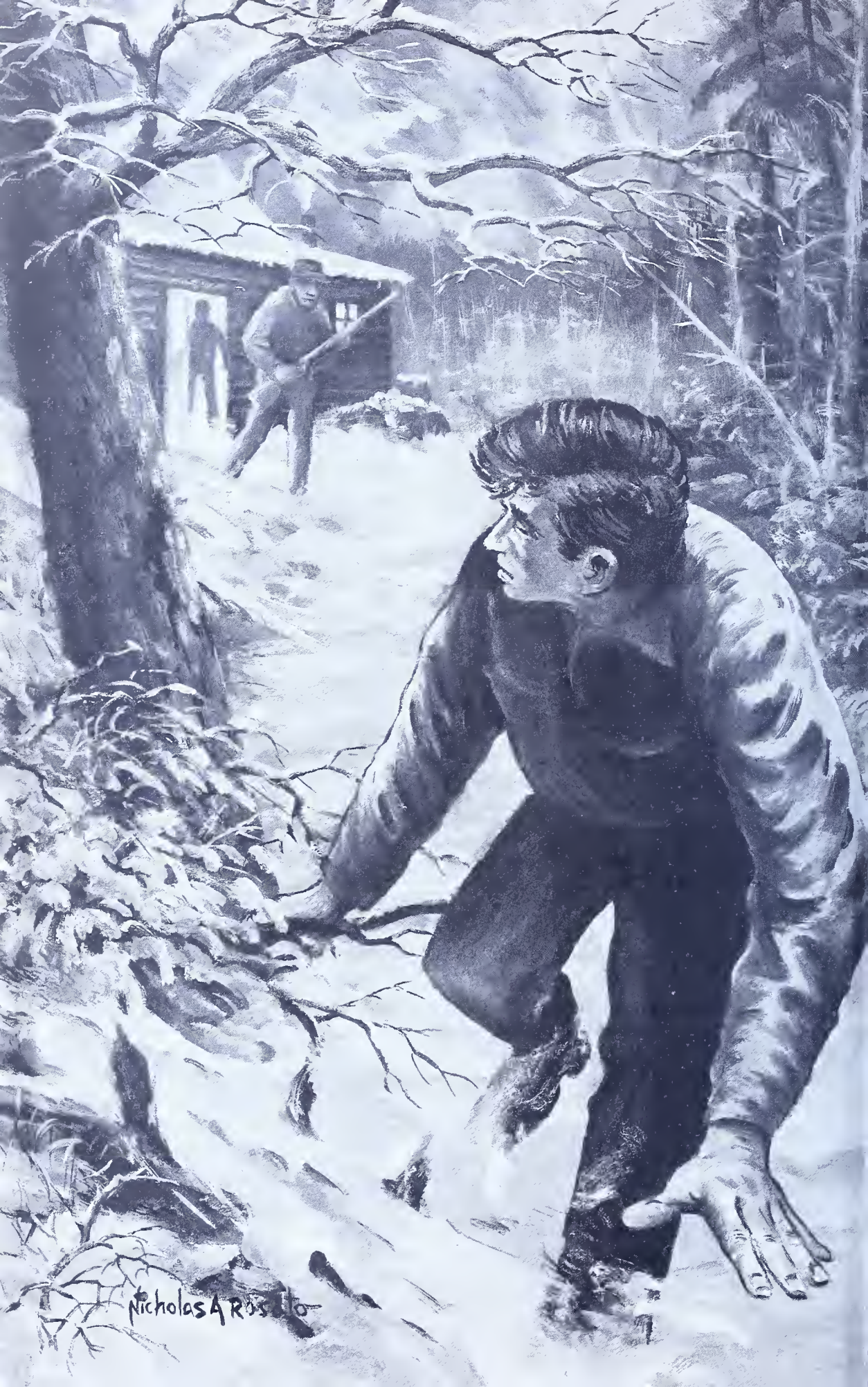
Louie is glad that the elk are being hunted again. "The elk are much bigger now than they used to be," he said. "Their racks used to go straight up, and now they're wider." He won't, however, be trying for a chance to hunt them this year. Although he spent a lifetime hunting and fishing in Pennsylvania, as well as out West, in Michigan and in Canada, Louie gave up hunting about six years ago. He gave all of his guns to his grandkids, including the .303 Savage he hunted with in Dents Run.

When he was 14, Louie went to work in the mines, but when he was 16, the miners went on strike. During that summer, he lived in a farmhouse on Pine Creek and helped build the road from Coudersport to Galeton. In the fall, he went back to the mines, where he worked until 1933, when there was an accident. A house was on fire, and Louie broke into it to help. The house blew up, and he was in and out of the hospital for 18 months being treated for burns. While his face was clearing up and his hair was growing back, he lived in Dents Run with an old trapper who supported himself by selling "home brew" to the locals and hunters.

After Louie recovered, a piece of glass remained in his head (which was later removed), so he couldn't wear a hard hat in the mines. So his father sent him to meat cutting school in Toledo, Ohio, and from then until he retired, he was a butcher.

It was while working at the A&P in Ridgway that Louie went on a date with Beatrice, who was the girlfriend of the store's produce manager. When Beatrice's sister Marie came in to give Louie a talking-to for trying to break up Beatrice's relationship with the produce manager, Louie asked Marie out. Well, before long Louie and Marie were married. Seven years ago, Marie had a stroke, and three years ago, she passed on. Now Louie just reminisces about the times he spent hunting and fishing, and enjoys sharing his stories and photos over a glass of wine in his comfortable living room.

This November, for the first time in 70 years, there will be an elk season in Pennsylvania. As I'm sure Arnold Giovanini and Louie Morelli will attest, just the opportunity to pursue these magnificent animals in the Keystone State is an opportunity that will be cherished for a lifetime. □



Nicholas A Rosseto

The Killers

By William Wasserman

Wyoming County WCO

THE FIRST THING he noticed when he came to was that he had a blinding headache. Like an ice pick had been jammed into the back of his skull. He could hear voices coming from somewhere. Distant at first, unintelligible, but gradually drifting closer through the billowing pain.

He gazed at the ceiling of the hunting camp. What was he doing, lying on the couch? Must have passed out. He could remember throwing down shots and beers with the gang when an argument broke out. Then what? That's right. Drago and Lennie were fighting over money. A lot of money. Drug money. Drago pulled his butterfly knife, whirled the stainless handle twice and flashed a 6-inch blade in Lennie's face. Lennie charged at him in a fit of rage. He never saw Slater and Lavar. They were on him fast. Holding him while Drago opened him up.

It all started coming back to him. Slowly at first, then at warpspeed. He tried to stop them, but Lavar saw him coming and slugged him in the gut with a fist of stone. He doubled over, retching helplessly. Then someone struck him on the head and everything went black.

He shifted his eyes to the left. Drago, Slater and Lavar were sitting at a card table, their backs toward him, deep in conversation. Cigarette smoke hung in the cabin like an oppressive fog. A dark, crimson stain bloomed on the surface of the carpet. It looked like blood, and as he listened to the three men a deepening terror swarmed into his chest. Their conversation was about him. The men he planned to go deer hunting with had murdered Lennie, and now they were plotting to kill their only witness.

Lavar laced his fingers over the back of his head and leaned back. "The way I see it, we got no choice. We gotta kill him. He saw us do Lennie."

Drago slapped his hand on the table to punctuate his opinion. "Agreed. Besides, we can get rid of two bodies easy as one. But we finish him outside. I don't want no more mess in here."

"We're wasting time," Slater said. "It'll be easier if we take care of him before he wakes up."

The conversation seemed like a dream. He had to escape. His eyes strained through the dim wash of light. Their rifles were still neatly placed in gun racks on the far wall — hopefully empty. Although a little woozy from his head injury, odds were still good he'd be out the door before they could stop him. Their backs were turned, and they'd been drinking heavily. It was freezing outside, with six inches of snow, and he'd have to go without his coat, but taking a chance on dying from the elements was better than facing certain death in the cabin.

He sprang from the couch, leaped toward the cabin's back door and yanked it open. In two fleeting seconds, he was outside, the darkness and snow turning everything black and white. He hit an icy spot as he fled, causing his feet to splay and then shoot out from under him. He hit his head hard, losing valuable seconds, and then he jumped up and spotted someone following. It was Slater, and he had a rifle.

He sprinted wildly down the narrow jeep trail toward the base of the



WHEN I picked up the phone, I heard Trooper Chet Goldyn's voice. "Bill, we have a guy at the barracks who claims there's been a murder in a remote section of the county. We think the suspects are still there, and could use an extra man with a four-wheel-drive vehicle."

mountain. The nerves in his spine bunched into an excruciating knot as he imagined a bullet slamming into him. He was an easy target. The full moon illuminated the snow on the landscape, its shadows playing eerily among the naked oak and beech trees as he ran for his life. But the combination of his utter panic and poor physical condition took its toll. His legs became cement, his lungs heaved, his body drenched in sweat. He looked back; no one was coming.

Suddenly, there came a rough mechanical whine. It was an ATV. Slater had upped the odds 500 percent in his favor. He scanned the terrain, searching frantically for cover. He spotted a snowdrift. It was his only chance, so he dove behind it.

Hours passed before he moved a muscle. Ironically, he thought, Slater, Drago and Lavar might just get their wish. It'd be perfect, too. They'd find him dead and frozen in the morning with a lump on his head. His fall on

the ice blew any chance the cops would suspect anything.

The bitter cold was unbearable. He had to find help. His clothes were wet, and his body shook convulsively. If he didn't make a move, hypothermia and death were inevitable. Willing deadened legs to move, he stood woodenly and staggered down the mountain in a pathetic lurching gate.

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been a murder in a remote section of the county. We think the suspects are still there, and could use an extra man with a four-wheel-drive vehicle."

"I'm all yours," I said. "How soon do you need me?"

"Right now," said the trooper.

I was caught a little off guard, because telephone calls the night before buck season are usually about poaching, not murder. The troopers and I had joined forces many times over the years, pulling together to investigate hunting related shooting incidents and poaching cases — even did a few manhunts. But this would be my first assist on a homicide.

When I arrived at the state police barracks, Trooper Goldyn was interviewing a witness, writing down everything he said. Corporal George Meyers saw me walk in and stepped out of his office into the narrow corridor. "Thanks for coming, Bill." His expression was grave. "The man we're interviewing just walked out of the hospital. He'd been in the emergency room with hypothermia. He was found yesterday morn-

ing wandering around without a coat, apparently delirious. Hospital says his body temperature was way down. Lucky they found him. He claims his hunting buddies murdered a man named Lennie June, then they went after him.”

Corporal Meyers filled me in on the rest of the story, then leaned back against the wall and folded his arms across his chest. “I don’t know,” he mused. “The man seems believable, but he also admits he’d been drinking heavily when all this took place. The lump on his head is real enough, though.” He turned and stared into the interrogation room. Trooper Goldyn continued to question the witness. “Something must have happened up there,” he said. “We have no choice but to take him seriously.”

“I have two deputies out in another four-wheel-drive vehicle,” I said. “Want them to meet us?”

“Appreciate it. We leave in 30 minutes.” Corporal Meyers started toward his office, then turned abruptly and faced me. “By the way, we checked criminal records. Slater’s got an extensive rap sheet, and Drago and Lavar aren’t exactly angels either. They’re tied in with the Heathens, an outlaw motorcycle gang out of Philadelphia.”

State police and Game Commission vehicles snaked their way slowly up the winding mountain road. It was midnight, a thick cloud cover obscured any hint of moonlight. We almost missed the narrow jeep trail that cut to our right and led to the suspects’ cabin. Turning in, our vehicles jostled through mud and snow, but the trail became impassible after several hundred yards when we hit thick sheets of ice. We stopped, grabbed our equipment and bailed out.

Corporal Meyers was in charge. The plan was to make our way to the cabin and determine if it was occupied. If so, we were to move in quickly and take control. Troopers Jeff Ceccarelli and Chad Cunningham formed the reconnaissance team. Armed with sniper rifles and night scopes they

roamed forward, their black garb soon melting into the darkness. They were to make an exploratory survey of the territory, scouting ahead to ensure our raid would be unexpected.

After giving them a 10-minute lead, we moved forward, deputies Joe Shivock and Fred Herman guarding our rear. Walking was difficult — each step a deliberate effort to secure footing. My topographical map indicated we were at 1,000 feet elevation, and the camp at 2,100 feet. Our trek would be much more difficult as we forged ahead.

Suddenly, a portable radio cracked. It was recon, their transmission sounding like eggs in a hot skillet. Although the message was scratchy, its intent was clear. We were being warned to stay back.

Trooper Chet Goldyn barked into his radio, “Recon, are you all right?”

“Affirmative,” came the reply. “Stay put, we’re coming in.”

As we waited in silent vigil, the night grew perpetually bleaker. Clouds thickened, and a gloomy ocean of darkness enveloped us. Soon, two shadowy figures appeared like apparitions on the horizon. It was Ceccarelli and Cunningham. They had discovered three pickup trucks parked helter-skelter along the trail ahead. The vehicles had too much distance between them to be inspected safely by just two men.

We followed the troopers until the hulking frames of the trucks materialized on the dim trail ahead. Breaking into three teams we moved in and checked each vehicle for occupants. All were empty, and Meyers called in the license numbers. They came back to Drago, Slater and Lavar. The three men had evidently walked from here. We were now certain our suspects would be at the cabin when we arrived.

Once again, recon pushed ahead

while we followed 100 yards behind. The mountain seemed to ascend to the heavens. Travel became more treacherous with every bend in the twisting, icy trail. After climbing for 30 minutes another message came over the radio. This time it was clear and crisp: "We can see the cabin," recon whispered. "Lights are on and there are people inside. There are two doors — back and front."

"We copy," answered the corporal. "You'll have backup in 10 minutes."

"Ten-four," the voice answered low and clear.

The cabin, its windows glowing eerily in the somber night, seemed close enough to touch as we ascended the last 50 yards. We were amazed to see a pickup truck parked nearby. The owner was either highly skilled at driving up treacherous mountain passes or too drunk to care. In any event, the truck meant at least one, or perhaps several additional people were inside, and the possibility that we'd be outnumbered.

After regrouping, we huddled together and made final plans to storm the cabin. Confident we hadn't been seen, the advantage would be ours. Still, with the cabin 50 feet away, we'd have to move fast with guns drawn and ready. Suddenly, at the cabin door, a tiny, red glowing ember appeared floating in the blackness, then arced downward and out of sight. A cigarette.

Everyone froze. Whoever it was hadn't noticed us, despite being close enough to hand him an ashtray. If we were discovered now, the men inside would have plenty of time to react.

Perhaps with gunfire. And the cabin, acting as a barricade, would give them a superior position. We waited. When he flipped his cigarette into the snow and stepped inside, we made our move. Breaking into two teams, we rushed forward, feet crunching through the frozen snow. Reaching the

cabin in seconds, we split up, one squad entered the front while the other advanced through the rear, the trooper ahead of me charging through the back door, pistol pointed in defense. "Police!" he said. "Put your hands in the air."

There were four men inside, and their mouths hung agape as state police and conservation officers poured inside and quickly scanned the cabin interior for additional suspects. Two troopers broke off

and searched adjacent rooms. Corporal Meyers informed the four men that we were investigating the report of a homicide at the cabin.

Drago was first to speak. A huge, barrel-chested man with dark, shoulder-length hair and a big, thick beard. "You think somebody was killed in my cabin?" he boomed. "Who?"

Corporal Meyers told Drago about the witness — how he watched Lennie June being stabbed after an argument about drug money, then running through the snow while Slater chased him with a rifle, and later an ATV. How he was found the next day at the base of the mountain with a head injury, suffering badly from hypothermia.

"I'm Lennie June," a thin voice spoke up. "That's my truck parked outside. I just got here two hours ago; the engine's probably still warm. I was in Philly yesterday. Man, this is nuts." Tension eased as he handed Meyers his driver's license.

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The trooper examined it carefully, and then his keen eyes searched the four men thoroughly, probing each face for a weak link. There was always one who would talk to save his own skin, but he found no lack of will in these men.

"Something happened here," Meyers said. "Nobody bails out of a warm cabin and runs down a mountain in the dead of winter in street clothes for nothing. This guy almost froze to death. Somebody better start explaining what went on here last night."

"I think he has mental problems," Slater said. "Maybe the beer helped; he drank a whole case by himself. The rest of us hardly touched any. I mean, I can't believe this. I bring the guy up here and he pulls this stunt." Slater shook his head reflectively. "He's been having trouble at home. I thought some time away would do him good."

"He's right," Drago cut in. "This is my cabin. We were trying to help the guy. He passed out on the couch and when he came to he started screaming some nonsense about Lennie being dead. Then he ran out the door. He didn't even have a coat. Soon as he got outside, he fell on the ice. That's probably how he got the bump on his head."

"I went after him all right," Slater said, "but I didn't have a gun. I was trying to help him. He was screaming like a banshee when he took off. I hopped on the four-wheeler and looked all over the place for him. I couldn't find him, though."



"I'M LENNIE JUNE," a thin voice spoke up. "That's my truck parked outside. I just got here two hours ago; the engine's probably still warm."

Drago waved his hand suggestively. "Look around. Every gun in the cabin is locked up. The ammo's locked up, too. We did that to protect ourselves. We were afraid he'd come back and start shooting people."

The men were convincing, but so had been our witness. We searched the cabin, but found nothing to indicate a homicide had taken place. There was no bloody carpet as our witness had alleged, and the person supposedly murdered stood before us. The investigation was over, with the exception of forthcoming charges against our "witness" for false statements.

As we journeyed back down the mountain there was a general sense of relief among us that our raid had come off without incident. We reached our vehicles in minutes, our pace brisk. It was 3 a.m. when we parted company. The first day of buck season would open in a few hours and my day would begin anew. □

LIGHT GATHERS in the eastern sky as a doe and her twin fawns follow a trail to higher ground where they will bed down. A fox barks far down the hollow, proclaiming that night is at end. Crows stir and caw. A pileated woodpecker cackles wildly as it flies by, fracturing the crisp autumn air. Sunlight streams through holes in the leafy canopy, lighting the oak flat like a stage set, and as it intensifies, the forest glows with a magical golden incandescence.

The day does not officially begin, though, until the first gray squirrel appears on a high sunlit branch, stretching and yawning and scratching an ear. It works its way down the tree, spiraling around the trunk, stopping to survey the flat. Soon it is joined on the ground by another and they forage noisily for acorns. Other sounds made by squirrels can be heard in the distance: claws raking on bark, the rustling of leafy catapults, a kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk-wheeeze barking farther up the slope.

I sit in a windfall, my .22 across a mossy trunk, solid as a benchrest. Thirty yards out a squirrel hangs by its double-jointed back legs, eating a nut. I weld the crosshairs between its eye and ear and take my first squirrel of the season. As I walk over to pick up the big gray I recall how thrilled I was almost 40 years ago when my first squirrel fell to a single shotgun pellet. In Pennsylvania, deer hunting is our passion, but squirrels are

our pastime, and every year a quarter-million Keystone State hunters bag more than a million squirrels.

The squirrel is the very spirit of golden autumn, condensed and wrapped in silver. I was excited when I was asked to paint a gray squirrel for this month's cover. Grays are handsome animals, and this one sits on a small stump amid some shagbark hickories. Ironically, some of this painting was painted with a brush made of squirrel hair. As I worked on this portrait I could not help but think of past squirrel hunts and of all the beautiful places I have hunted them. For me, the gray squirrel was not just the focus of my hunting youth, but the first stepping-stone to a professional career as a nature artist and writer. I'm indebted to the noble squirrel, and I hope this shows in this humble portrait. Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best, "A squirrel leaping from bough to bough and making the wood one wide tree for his pleasure, fills the eye not less than a lion, is beautiful, self-sufficing, and stands then and there for nature."

Last fall I had been still-hunting with my bow for deer, but felt out of sync with the woods. I was taking it much too seriously, trying too hard. For the second year in a row, acorn and hickory mast was bountiful and the squirrel population had exploded. I thought that the best thing I could

The Spirit of Autumn

Penn's Woods Sketchbook/Bob Sopchick



do to get in step with the rhythm of the woods was take a couple of days and hunt squirrels instead. I slowed down, and let the subtleties of the season filter through my senses. Soon, my pulse matched that of the uplands, and I moved easily through the big timber. When I went back to hunting whitetails, I was confident and relaxed, and killed a deer while drifting through a pine woods the next day.

One of the squirrel hunts was especially exciting. It was a windy day and I left my rifle at home, opting for a 16-gauge double. The squirrels were skittish — every one a flash of quicksilver. I missed several, but did manage to take six of the more than two dozen I saw.

Squirrel hunting can be enjoyed by hunters of any age or experience. One senior hunter I met walking a tram road told me that he was 81 years old. "I started with squirrels and hunted everything else in between, but squirrels are still my favorite." He

carried a pewtery Winchester Model 12, and as he walked away I noticed that his game pouch was heavy with bushytails. Even the seasoned middle-aged hunter will find it a joy to rediscover squirrel hunting. It can be a humbling experience for a rifleman, and it may be time to put together a custom squirrel rig for those senior years ahead. If you haven't hunted with your dad recently, I mean right beside him like you did when you were a kid, then I encourage you to take a few hours out of your all-too-busy schedule and spend a day hunting squirrels with him like you used to. I did just that last fall, and at the risk of sounding too sentimental, can tell you that sitting there together silently as we did so many years ago was special.

In that simple squirrel woods of towering oaks and hickories and curtains of grapevines the immortal land seemed to have risen like a wall around us, cloistering us, father and son, within a place both intimate and ever-expanding. We belonged

there together, had been there before, and part of us there would forever remain.

Of those among us, it is the younger hunters who especially belong in the squirrel woods. Beyond lessons of safe firearms handling, woodsmanship and the snippets of natural history, perhaps the single greatest thing young hunters can learn to realize is that the natural world is not a separate place, an alien place beyond their everyday existence. That it was there first, is still there, and that they are not visitors to this place, but are part of it every day, no matter where they are. Even in this modern age, no one lives outside of nature.

Hunting and Shooting

Squirrels are where the food is. Find acorns, beechnuts, hickories, walnuts or hazelnuts in any abundance and you'll find squirrels. Where I hunt there is a variety of mixed hardwoods that harbor a substantial population of both grays and its larger cousin, the fox squirrel. Both species also like corn, and a leisurely stroll with a shotgun along a cornfield that borders a woods can provide lots of action. Be ready though, because a squirrel can cover those few yards between the corn and the safety of the woods as quick as a cottontail.





Squirrel calls are used to stop an active squirrel long enough to take a shot, or lure one out of hiding to take a peek at the commotion. Squirrels are vocal, and with practice it's easy to imitate their calls with your mouth. One call that sounds good is made by wetting a cork on the lips and stroking it against a small, slab-sided bottle. There are several commercially made bellows calls that are easy to use and a squirrel whistle that sounds like a young squirrel being attacked by a hawk.

I like to shoot from a solid rest with my lead hand pressed against a tree. Don't rest the gun's forend directly against a hard surface because even a rimfire will recoil away from it, throwing the shot. Because I like to use a rest, I'll often sit behind a tree instead of against it. Mostly though, I prefer the "sneak-and-lean" technique for squirrels, taking 40 minutes to cover 125 yards. I take deliberate, quiet steps, then lean against a tree and scan the woods. If I spook a squirrel I let it watch me walk away, then hook back around from another direction. No matter how you hunt, move slowly. When there's a sudden rustling of leaves behind you, never turn suddenly. You'll appreciate this discipline come deer season.

Squirrel hunting is most productive just after sunrise and in late afternoon, when grays are most active, but my favorite is a drizzly day when squirrels are active at any hour. It's been said that fox squirrels are later risers than grays, but I've seen fox squirrels foraging before sunrise many times.

The Bushytail Battery

Because squirrels can be taken with a variety of firearms, the challenge can be enhanced by the limitations of the gun. Some hunters take the blackpowder route, reliving the days of colonial squirrel hunters, and in a like vein, I've hunted squirrels with my longbow.

Looking back, I've used a diverse battery of rimfire rifles and handguns, from iron-sighted antique octagonal barrel pumps to modern bolt rifles with wonderful optics. Squirrel hunting requires precise accuracy. Every gun is different, and it's the responsibility of the hunter to test several brands of ammunition in their squirrel rig to see what shoots best. My Ruger 77/22 bolt gun topped with a Weaver 2-7x scope digests Eley target ammo and Winchester Super-X hollow points equally well.

Squirrel seasons are long and generous, and I also enjoy hunting them in the late season. It's hard for a rifleman to beat a day in a sparkling snowy woods when the cover is sparse and the shots are long. I limit my range with a rimfire to around 50 yards, but some rifleman may opt for the .22 magnum, which reaches out to 100 yards or so for this type of shooting. Top quality binoculars are indispensable for picking out distant squirrels.

I've also used an assortment of shotguns of all gauges, from vintage hammer guns to semi-autos. Shotguns with full or modified chokes that throw a tight pattern work best, but I prefer the instant choice of choke that a double gun offers — improved cylinder in the right tube for close shots, full choke in the left for distant shots. No matter what smoothbore I use, however, I stuff them with 5 or 6 shot and limit my range to 35 yards.

Gray Squirrel Target



Ammo _____
Yardage _____



Ammo _____
Yardage _____



Ammo _____
Yardage _____

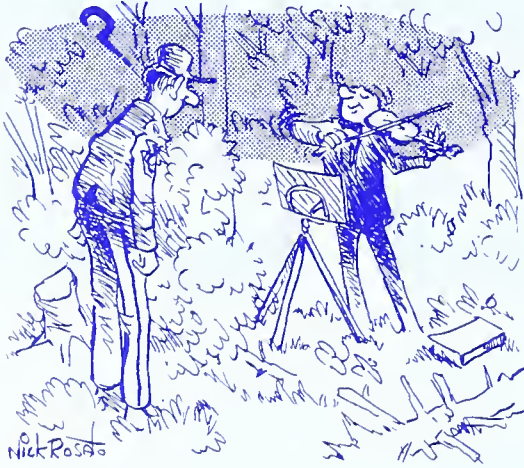
Make copies of this target and use it to sight-in your rifle. Use several different brands of ammunition to find which is most accurate in your gun. The white shape inside the outline of the squirrel is the 1- x 4-inch vital zone. For best results, sight-in from a benchrest, with the forend of the rifle supported by sandbags. Finally, place targets against a safe backstop.



Warning:
Even a .22 damages your hearing with every shot. Wear ear and eye protection.



FIELD NOTES



You Never Know

ERIE — I noticed a vehicle parked along a road on SGL 314 and soon after heard music coming from a small opening in the woods. To my surprise a man was playing a violin and acting as if he was in a symphony. I left without him knowing I was there, and I had to wonder if his music was soothing to the wildlife, or his wife made him leave the house to practice.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN

Successful and Safe

FULTON — Father and son Bill and Bradley Buterbaugh of McConnellsburg never removed their fluorescent orange hats when they bagged two nice gobblers last spring near SGL 53.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Litter retrieved from game lands included a chain letter written by the person who had dumped it. The letter stated that failure to forward it on would bring bad luck. Imagine the look on the litterer's face when the local WCO knocked on her door.

— WES JOSEPH G. WENZEL, NORTHEAST REGION, DALLAS

Couldn't Believe It

BUTLER/LAWRENCE — Last spring I was driving by a secluded parking area at Moraine State Park when I noticed a hen turkey followed by a gobbler strutting amidst the hunters' parked cars. The old bird no doubt felt that the parking lot was much more quiet than the noisy woods with the incessant calling from all the hunters.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PORTERSVILLE

Can't Win

BRADFORD — Deputy Charlie Fox watched two drake mallards fight over a female and, finally, one male was driven off. The victorious drake, however, then had to keep the female from chasing after the vanquished male.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Courageous

BUTLER — I noticed a robin chasing what appeared to be a red squirrel, but turned out to be a weasel that turned and bounced up and down, thwarting the robin's advance. Apparently, the weasel tried to raid her nest, and I had to admire the robin's bravery, because a weasel has the tenacity of a wolverine.

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, RENFREW

New Award

MONROE — Dispatcher Dominic Anastasi jokingly told me about the "triple trophy award" for WCOs who receive three calls from the same individual in one day. Unfortunately, I've recently come up for the award. A member of a camp in my district called one day to report that someone had poached a deer on his property, a bear killed a sheep, and a beaver flooded their lake.

— WCO PETER SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Never Do It Again

HUNTINGDON — I left in my garage a full body black bear mount I had been using for a program, and it seems my young son decided to play in there that particular day. My wife came around the corner, checking on our son, and noticed the large bear looking at him. Although my son wasn't concerned about his new "playmate," his mother's loud scream got his attention. From now on I have to let my wife know when I leave "wild animals" in the garage.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER,
HUNTINGDON

It Wasn't Santa Claus

NORTHAMPTON — Charles and Karen Conrad were quick to call the Lehigh Township police when they were awakened at 1:30 in the morning by footsteps on their roof. Officers McGonigle and Henry discovered the would-be "burglar" was a 300-pound bear pacing back and forth on the roof. Before I could get there to tranquilize and relocate the bear, it climbed down and ate 40 pounds of bird seed, and then broke the water line under the mobile home.

— WCO BRADLEY D. KREIDER, CHERRYVILLE

Priorities

TRAINING SCHOOL — Members of the 26th Class were looking forward to their land management assignments for several reasons. My personal favorite: no tests for a whole week.

— TRAINEE JOHN W. VEYLUPEK, HARRISBURG

Good Day

WAYNE — I had four vocal toms coming in during gobbler season when I noticed a hunter dressed in full camouflage stalking the birds. I quickly called "stop," and then warned the man that stalking gobblers in the spring and not displaying orange clothing while moving are violations of the law. The day was not a total loss, however, because a half hour later the four toms came waltzing back to my calls.

— WCO FRANK DOOLEY, TYLER HILL

Ladies Night Out

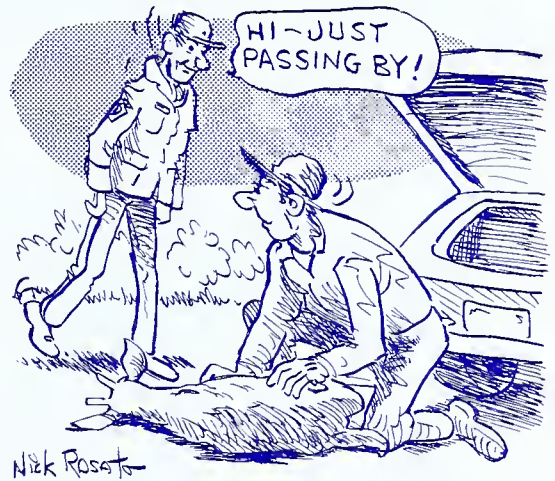
PGC supervisor Steve Schweitzer and I noticed three bucks with nice racks and a fawn feeding side-by-side along a road through game lands in Pike County. I guess it was dad's day to watch the kid.

— LMO JOHN SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Got Out Just in Time

YORK — Although there are no resident bears, we're getting more and more reports of sightings here. Former WCO Greg Houghton, in his 20 years in the northern district, never had a bear/vehicle collision to deal with, but two days after he started his new position in Harrisburg, I was called to assist state police with a bear injured on I-83, not far from Greg's home.

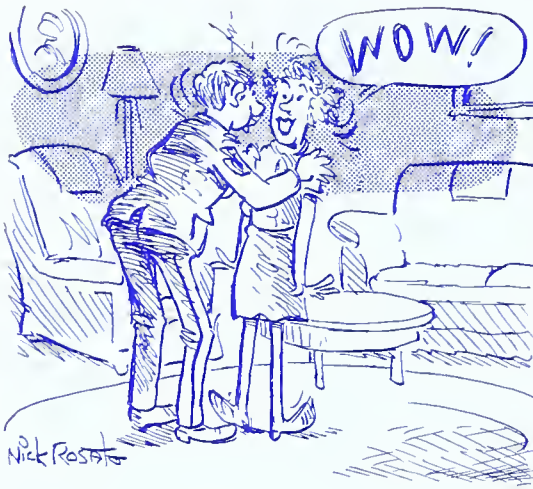
— WCO RODNEY P. MEE, EAST BERLIN



It had Horns

MONROE — Dispatcher Dominic Anastasi radioed me about a woman who reported an individual who shot a deer, dragged it across a field and placed it in a vehicle. She even knew where the culprit lived. While driving to the suspect's house, however, I thought that something just didn't seem right. When I arrived, the vehicle was in the driveway with the trunk open and the suspect was wearing gloves and kneeling over something. It turns out the man was trying to determine how his goat had died.

— WCO VICTOR E. ROSA, SWIFTWATER



Bag Full of Memories

SCHUYLKILL — Steven Rittle of Ringtown told me he had a great first year of hunting. He bagged a 4-point buck, six pheasants, five rabbits and three squirrels, and missed a snowshoe. Steven had such marvelous experiences because someone took the time to take him. This fall, give some thought about the future of our hunting heritage and take the time to share the outdoors with a youngster. You'll both benefit from it.

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON

Hot Lips

TRAINING SCHOOL — In defensive tactics class we were sprayed with pepper spray to learn what it can do and how to deal with it if it was used on us. After a long shower I was sure I had removed all the residue, but that evening, after arriving home for the weekend, I kissed my wife and after a few moments she said her lips were burning. This puts a new spin on the phrase, "taking your work home."

— TRAINEE CLINT J. DENIKER, HARRISBURG

Anything but Graceful

LACKAWANNA — The summer before last, residents of Gravel Pond purchased a pair of mute swans to deter Canada geese from inhabiting their lake. Last spring, however, another male swan decided to make Gravel Pond his home, so he killed the original male. The new pair is rearing two sibling cygnets.

— WCO DANIEL FIGURED, DUNMORE

Cheaper than a Dozen Worms

BUCKS — I was fishing and trying to read my *Game News* at the same time, but each time I tried to get through an article a fish would bite. I couldn't finish even one article, but I did catch several catfish and rainbow trout. I eventually decided to keep my hook out of the water to finish reading. Who would believe that the best bait around is *Game News*.

— WCO STEPHEN T. HANCZAR, OTTSVILLE

Early Bird Catches the Worm

MERCER — People are reporting seeing a lot of turkey poults all across the county, and one brood was discovered by a spring gobbler hunter, who almost tripped over them as he was leaving the woods on May 19th.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Dual Rescue

LYCOMING — WCO Rick Macklem and I responded to a call about some ducklings that were trapped in a storm drain. After some help from Old Lycoming Township police, and a concerned citizen with a backhoe, we got the ducklings out, while the nearby mother duck watched us. I tried to net the hen, so we could transport the reunited family, but she flew a short distance away to Lycoming Creek. Just as we released the ducklings on the creek, a mink jumped off the bank and headed for the little ones. The mother duck quickly intervened, however, and after a few tense moments the mink retreated.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTGOMERYVILLE

Good Advice

PERRY — Gypsy moths were prolific in some areas, damaging trees, so this fall the food supply for wildlife may be in an entirely different area than last year. Only by scouting will you increase your chances of being in the right spots during the hunting seasons.

— WCO JIM BROWN, LOYSVILLE

Barking Up the Wrong Tree

POTTER — I felt something brush up against my head and noticed a common yellowthroat bird land in a tree in front of me. Judging from the way the bird was fussing, it was surprised to discover that I was not a tree, despite my name.

— WCO DENISE H. MITCHELTREE,
CROSS FORKS

Evened the Score

HUNTINGDON — I was getting ready to relocate a large male bear I had caught, but when I hitched up the culvert trap I noticed it had a flat tire. It seems the bear had bitten it before entering the trap, and that meant I had to drive 25 miles to the Southcentral Region Office for a new tire. After I got back I tried to tranquilize the bear, but he bit the syringe off the end of my jab stick, and it took me awhile to finally get it tranquilized. This bear had already taken up most of my day, but if that wasn't enough, when I reached the release site, expecting the bruin to be awake and eager to go, he was sound asleep and decided to nap for another two hours.

— WCO JOHN B. ROLLER, HUNTINGDON

Tough Day

TIOGA — An individual told me he had stopped along busy Route 328 to watch a bear trying to get to the other side. Each time the bear would try to cross, a vehicle would pass and chase it back into the brush. The bear stayed in the brush a little longer after one pass, and when it emerged again it had a fawn in its mouth. Soon, a doe came charging out of the brush and butted and pawed at the bear until it dropped the fawn and took off into the brush, for good.

— WCO ROBERT F. MINNICH, MANSFIELD

Packing it On

SOMERSET — I trapped a bear that I had caught earlier in the spring, and after checking my records noticed that in 35 days she had gained 38 pounds. I guess you could say there's plenty of food available.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Can Only Wonder

TRAINING SCHOOL — While cleaning up the range after a shooting session, Trainee Amy Gladfelter found a 4-leaf clover. Imagine what her score might have been had she found it before the shoot.

— TRAINEE SCOTT S. FREDERICK, HARRISBURG

It's True

JUNIATA — Just about every hunter I talked to last spring said they either saw or heard gobblers nearly every day they were out. Early settlers in Penn's Woods would have been overwhelmed by today's turkey populations.

— WCO DANIEL I. CLARK, HONEY GROVE

Not Like a Squirrel, Though

TRAINING SCHOOL — In one of my classes I was surprised to learn that groundhogs can climb trees, but while on a field trip I witnessed it firsthand.

— TRAINEE AMY GLADFELTER, HARRISBURG



Chompin' at the Bit

ARMSTRONG — At a Youth Field Day held at the Freeport Sportsmen's Club, the mother of one of the youngsters said that her son was so excited about attending that he didn't sleep the night before and had butterflies in his stomach the morning of the event. I know that the boy was not disappointed. Statements like these make all the work worthwhile.

— WCO BARRY J. SETH, WORTHINGTON

Wanted No Parts of That

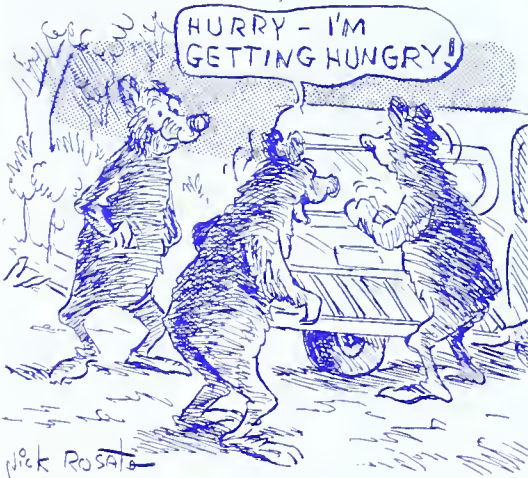
SCHUYLKILL — While doing a program for about 40 youngsters in Minersville, I was showing the kids furs and identifying each mammal as I went. After showing a fur, I would hand it to county Environmental Education Specialist "Porcupine" Pat McKinney, who would then walk around and allow each youngster to see the fur up close. Everything was going smoothly until I got to the fisher. When I handed it to Porcupine Pat, he cringed and jumped back. I was somewhat puzzled until I remembered that fishers are the number one predator of porcupines.

— WCO STEPHEN S. HOWER, PINE GROVE

Appreciated

MONTGOMERY — I want to thank the Upper Salford Township and Lower Frederick Township fire companies for their help in saving a great horned owl that was in trouble 100 feet up in a tree. Volunteer firefighters never get enough recognition for all that they do.

— WCO BILL VROMAN, FREDERICKSBURG



Just Might Work

PIKE — Bears here have figured out how to unlock neighboring WCO Rob Buss's pickup truck cap to steal his bait. I think Rob has had more bears in his truck than he has caught in culvert traps. Maybe he should just hide in the back of his truck with his tranquilizer gun.

— WCO BOB JOHNSON, MATAMORAS



"Smelled" a Field Note

BEDFORD — A certain Blair County WCO's wife sent him to buy mulch for around their new home. Apparently this officer is "aromatically challenged," because instead of mulch he spread 12 bags of cow manure. Guess the guys at Lowes are to blame for mislabeling the mulch, right, Al?

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

Oops!

PERRY — PGC supervisor Ed Willow and I were traveling through SGL 88 on the Tuscarora Mountain when we stopped to watch a flock of turkeys. To our surprise, a bobcat fled from the tall grass a few yards from the birds. I guess we interrupted its lunch.

— CHARLES SCHMITT, GAME LANDS
MAINTENANCE WORKER, LIVERPOOL

Got Her Trained

GREENE — My 10-year-old daughter, Erin, and I were driving to our favorite blackberry picking spot when we noticed a ring-necked pheasant that must of had a close call with a predator, because most of its tail was gone. As I drove past the bird, it chased my truck up the road and was going so fast it was leaving a dust trail, and when I stopped it chased me back the way I had come from. I asked Erin what she thought about the crazy bird, and thinking like a WCO's daughter should, she replied, "Field Note."

— WCO ROD BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Eagle numbers soar

THIS PAST summer 53 active bald eagle nests were found in Pennsylvania, up from 48 the year before and 41 in 1999. Nesting population growth over the past two years has been more normal compared to the explosion the state experienced from 1997 to 1999, according to PGC biologist Dan Brauning.

"This year's nesting increase isn't the headline-grabber it was in 1999, when nesting pairs increased by 13," Brauning said. "But expansion continues. The good news is that there's been very solid reproduction of young and that new nests keep popping up in new places, places where eagles haven't been since the 1800s."

"Given the availability of uninhabited eagle habitat in Pennsylvania, it seems a safe bet that our nesting population will continue to increase."

"In certain areas, like the lower Susquehanna River and the Pymatuning Lake area, eagles may be close to saturating their available habitat," Brauning said. "But in other areas, such as the north branch of the Susquehanna and upper Delaware River, as well as some of the state's large, currently uninhabited lakes, there's potential for the population to continue growing."

"If Pine Creek can support two eagle nests, it seems possible that the Juniata River should get some nests soon, too," Brauning noted. "Eagles are nesting at the mouth of the Juniata on Haldeman Island and at Raystown Lake. The wait shouldn't be much longer."

Pennsylvania's nesting eagles seem

to becoming more tolerant of people. There's a new nest near the Harrisburg International Airport. Another is along the shoreline of Raystown Lake, an area where many boaters converge daily to fish, ski and cruise.

"Many of our newer nests tend to be closer to more developed areas," Brauning said. "Interestingly, their success rate for rearing young isn't any different than nests in more remote settings. The young from these sites will be more acclimated to civilization, and it's possible that they may be more inclined to nest closer to developed areas. If they do, they'll be expanding the base of available nesting habitat, in essence, redefining what we now consider acceptable."

Nationally, bald eagles were upgraded from an "endangered" to "threatened" species in 1995. They were first put on the national endangered species list in 1967, when it was believed fewer than 500 nests were found in the lower 48 states. Today, the Chesapeake Bay has more than 600 nesting pairs. The lower 48 may soon have more than 6,000 nesting pairs. The Game Commission first listed the bald eagle as an endangered species in 1978, and it remains a state endangered species today.

At Middle Creek, Jim Binder, manager of the area, reported that in mid-March crows destroyed and ate two eggs from an eagle nest when the eagles chased away another eagle in the area. The pair laid another egg, however, which did hatch.

On average, about 30 percent of Pennsylvania's nests don't produce

young. Some are nests being established by young eagles that will not lay eggs until the following year. Predators, such as raccoons and crows, take eggs and young, and nesting trees also fall in storms.

In a related story, two bald eagle chicks were saved from what would have been most certain death when their nest tree was blown over.

The rescue attempt started on April 12, when an eagle nest in a tree on SGL 269 in Crawford County blew over in a windstorm and spilled two eaglets onto the ground. On April 14, PGC Biologist Aide Brenda Peebles, Erie County Wildlife Conservation Officer (WCO) Mike Wojtecki, and Deputy WCOs John P. Kasony and Timothy P. Maruska recovered the two eaglets. After an examination by Dr. Kenneth Felix, an Erie veterinarian, the eaglets were placed in the care of the Tamarack Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Crawford County.

On April 17, a climbing team consisting of Venango County WCO Leonard C. Hribar and Land Management Group Supervisor (LMGS) Jerry A. Bish, began attempting to place the eaglets into existing wild nests on SGL 214 in southwestern Crawford County.

"Conditions were poor because of high winds and snow squalls, but we were anxious to get the birds back into the wild before they became im-

printed on humans," Bish said. "In order to find a suitable foster nest, we needed to make sure that the eaglets currently in the nest were similar in size to the ones we were looking to place. However, we also needed to avoid overburdening the parent eagles or causing a situation that would overcrowd the nest."

On April 23, after climbing several trees over six days to examine potential nest sites, suitable nests, each with only two eaglets, were found in Mercer and Butler counties. The team successfully introduced a foster eaglet into each nest.

Assisting the team at the Mercer County site were Peebles, Land Management Group Supervisor James E. Deniker, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor Michael H. Colgan and Game Commission Maintenance Worker Mark A. Karher. Assisting at the Butler County site were Peebles, Karher, Butler County WCO Arthur L. Brunst and Land Management Group Supervisor Dale E. Hockenberry.

"While fostering eaglets is unusual, this was not the first time our employees have been called on to do so," PGC Executive Director Vern Ross said. He noted that in 1996 the Game Commission assisted the Philadelphia Zoo in fostering into the wild a pair of eaglets that were hatched in captivity. — Joe Kosack

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Resident geese studied

WHILE THE NAME Canada goose conjures up images of long-distance migrations between the frigid north and winter haven in the south, the Game Commission has an entirely different perspective on this large waterfowl. Growing populations of resident Canada geese — those that for the most part do not migrate — are being blamed for fouling water supplies, causing crop damage and creating nuisances on public beaches and golf courses.

Over the past few years, the Game Commission has petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — which sets the parameters for migratory bird hunting seasons — for greater flexibility in establishing hunting seasons and bag limits to address the growing problems attributed to resident Canada geese. One way is by participating in a banding program to document the survival, movements and harvest rates of Pennsylvania's resident Canada geese.

For approximately four weeks beginning in late June, Canada geese in Pennsylvania are virtually flightless as they molt old flight feathers and grow new ones. During this window of opportunity, many PGC employees and volunteers capture geese and attach leg bands. John Dunn, Game Commission waterfowl biologist, explained that Canada geese residing in Pennsylvania in the summer are entirely separate from "flight geese," which travel through Pennsylvania in the fall.

"Everyone thinks these summer birds were short-circuited during a migration and then stayed in Pennsylvania," Dunn said. "That's not the case. We've seen a growing year-round

population of Canada geese for the past 20 years. We use the molt to capture and attach numbered leg bands. The subsequent band recoveries reported by hunters provide us with important information on goose survival and harvest rates that are needed to evaluate Pennsylvania's hunting seasons and their effects upon the resident Canada goose population."

Don Garner, Information and Education Supervisor for the Game Commission's Southcentral Region, explained that hunting is crucial in goose management.

"Many believe the Game Commission is an agency charged solely with providing hunting and trapping opportunities," said Garner, who assisted with a recent banding effort in Huntingdon. "It's true that our Board of Commissioners does establish seasons and bag limits with an eye towards maximizing a quality hunting experience. However, the agency also conducts a considerable amount of research, and banding Canada geese is a part of that ongoing research.

"We know that, except for some goslings, there is practically no natural predation on resident geese. Therefore, the Game Commission uses hunting as the most effective and cost-efficient management tool available to control wildlife populations, such as resident Canada geese."

Since 1992, a September, or "early," Canada goose season has been in place in northwest and southeast portions of the state to specifically control the resident goose population before migrant geese begin arriving from the north. In 1995, the early season was expanded to include all of the state.

Other Canada goose seasons in Pennsylvania are the regular season, which is held from mid-November through late-December; and the late season, which is held throughout most of the state from mid-January through mid-February. The late season, which also is designed to target resident Canada geese populations, is closed in the southeastern portion of the state and in the Pymatuning area in Crawford County, again to protect migrant geese from the north.

Dunn agreed, stating that hunting in southcentral Pennsylvania accounts for about 90 percent of the annual mortality of resident Canada geese and the population has stabilized there since the inception of the resident Canada goose hunting seasons. Yet, in southeastern Pennsylvania, where hunting opportunities are

more limited, resident goose numbers continue to spiral upwards.

"The banding process will help us demonstrate to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the importance of resident Canada geese in Pennsylvania's goose harvest," Dunn said.

"Resident or migrant, the Canada goose is a wonderful bird. They are intelligent, hardy and adaptable. It is our hope that this research, coupled with scientifically-based seasons, will allow us to maximize the aesthetics of the Canada goose while maintaining populations within acceptable social levels."

Hunters harvesting a banded goose are urged to report the number to the U.S. Geological Survey, Bird Banding Laboratory by calling toll-free 1-800-327-BAND.

Task force created to review Cameron County elk killing

GAME Commission Northcentral Region Director Barry R. Hambley has organized a task force to review all the evidence related to the illegal shooting of an elk last October, along Route 120 on the Clinton/Cameron county line. The task force will be led by Northcentral Region Law Enforcement Supervisor Warren "Quig" Stump, and will be comprised of several wildlife conservation officers.

"In order to move this case forward," said Hambley, "we will conduct a comprehensive review of the evidence, including re-interviewing witnesses and others with information about the case."

Anyone with information is encouraged to call the Game Commission's toll-free TIP Hotline at

1-888-PGC-8001, or the Northcentral Region Office at 1-877-877-7674. Any information received will be kept strictly confidential.

Hambley also stressed that the nearly \$5,000 in reward monies still stands for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for illegally killing the elk, which was believed to be perhaps the largest bull in the state elk herd. Those contributing to the reward, and the amount they are offering, are as follows:

- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation volunteers, \$1,000;
- Pennsylvania Deer Association, \$500;
- Safari Club International, Blue Mountain Chapter, \$500;

- Safari Club International, Delaware Valley Chapter, \$500;
- Safari Club International, Lehigh Valley Chapter, \$500;
- Safari Club International, Pittsburgh Chapter, \$500;
- United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania, \$500;
- Early Bird Sports Expo Association, Columbia County, \$250;
- Safari Club International, Susquehannock Chapter, \$250;
- Sinnemahoning Sportsmen's Club, Cameron County, \$250; and
- Bucktail Rod & Gun Club, Cameron County, \$100.

"This elk weighed more than 800 pounds and was especially impressive because of its massive, nontypical antlers," said Rawley Cogan, Commission elk biologist. "For those who had the opportunity to see it, the thrill will last a long time. Unfortunately, no one else will have that opportunity again."

With an outside antler spread of

more than six feet, this particular elk officially scored at 406 7/8 on the Boone & Crockett scale, and would have ranked in the top 30 for American elk in the non-typical antlers category (according to the 1999 Boone & Crockett *Records of North American Big Game* book). At 11 years of age, the elk was first captured and marked by the Game Commission in 1997. Its movements have been tracked over the past three years, and it was believed to be the largest bull in Pennsylvania's elk herd.

Generally a secretive and reclusive animal, the elk was last seen during the mating seasons. It was featured in the Game Commission's award-winning elk video, "Pennsylvania Elk: Reclaiming the Alleghenies."

For more information on Pennsylvania's elk herd, visit the Game Commission's website at www.pgc.state.pa.us (click on "Wildlife" and choose "Elk in Pennsylvania").

Celebrate NHF Day at Middle Creek September 23, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

CELEBRATE National Hunting and Fishing Day at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area. Young and old alike will be able to try shooting a BB gun and bow and arrow, learn to cast a fly rod, even how to call in wild turkeys. Pennsylvania's rich outdoor heritage and history, and Pennsylvania birds of prey — featuring live birds — will also be showcased.

"Frontiersman of 1790," by Giff Briner, 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.; "Ye Olde Colonial Angler, 1770," by Ken Reinard, noon and 3 p.m.; "Pennsylvania Birds of Prey," by Red Creek Wildlife Center, 1 p.m. & 4 p.m. will

be held in the auditorium. Bird dog demonstrations will be held at 1:30, 2:30 & 3:30 p.m.

A special line up for those under 16 will cover archery, muzzleloading rifles, BB gun shooting, fly rod casting, turkey calling and much more. There will even be a youth casting competition from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

The event is free and will be held rain or shine. The Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area is located on the Lancaster/Lebanon county line, two miles south of Kleinfeltersville. For more information, call 717-733-1512.

License application deadlines

APPLICATIONS and details for the upcoming bobcat and elk seasons are in the 2001-2002 *Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations*. Hunters and trappers may, instead, complete and submit applications on the agency's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us). The drawing for the bobcat permits will be held Sept. 14 at the agency's Harrisburg headquarters; elk licenses will be selected on Sept. 29, at the elk viewing area near Benezette.

Hunters planning to hunt in either of the flintlock seasons have until August 31 to purchase a muzzleloader stamp.

Hunters, residents and nonresidents, may apply for the first round of unsold antlerless licenses beginning Monday, Aug. 27; the second round

of unsold antlerless licenses may be applied for beginning Sept. 10. Check the agency's website for counties that still have antlerless licenses available.

In Special Regulations Area counties (Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia), county treasurers will begin accepting over-the-counter antlerless applications on Monday, Aug. 27. In all other counties, over-the-counter sales of antlerless deer and unsold tags will begin on Monday, Nov. 5.

County treasurers are required to mail regular antlerless licenses and first-round unsold licenses to successful applicants no later than Monday, Sept. 17. Second-round unsold licenses will be mailed no later than Sept. 24.



Rob Criswell

Members of The Susquehanna Valley Chapter of Pheasants Forever were recognized for their tremendous financial and volunteer support during PGC Executive Director Vern Ross's tour of state game lands this past summer. The Susquehanna Valley Chapter has helped develop wildlife habitat on SGL 169 in Cumberland County, SGL 249 in Adams County, and on Farm-Game projects in the area. Pictured, l to r, are Game Lands maintenance supervisor Timothy Bowers, Pheasant Forever members Bob Hilker, Ann Reinfried, George Reinfried, Mike Thoman, Kevin Rohland, Land Management Group Supervisor Steven Spangler and Vern Ross.

New Digest saves money and includes hunting annual

BY USING advertising, the Game Commission saved roughly \$180,000 in printing and distribution costs for the 1.5 million copies the 2001-2002 *Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations*. The digest cost the agency \$44,000 to print and distribute.

Last year, the first year in which ads were used in the digest, the printing and distribution cost was \$61,325, and ad revenues resulted in a savings of \$80,000. By comparison, the 1999-2000 digest cost the agency \$138,000 to print and distribute; but was a smaller, two-color version that offered only basic information on regulations and the hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits.

"This year we more than doubled our savings while increasing the amount of information we are providing to license buyers," said Bureau of Information and Education Director J. Carl Graybill Jr. "Beginning last year, we increased the size of the di-

gest and moved to a full-color format. This year we added a tear-out card listing the major hunting seasons and hunting hours table and a 16-page Hunting and Trapping Annual. As we continue to refine the process, we hope to reach a point in which the ad revenues will cover all costs for printing and distributing the digest."

The 16-page annual in this year's digest highlights many of the wildlife research projects and related programs the Game Commission is conducting. The annual represents the first time in the Game Commission's history that the agency has been able to reach every single license buyer with the latest information on what we're doing to make hunting and trapping the best they can be. "We plan to make this feature a regular part of future digests," said executive director Vern Ross, "and we will continue to look for new ways to educate the public about our wildlife management efforts."

WCO PATRICK SNICKLES, Indiana County, was recently recognized by the District 5 PA Trappers Association as "Conservationist of the Year." Presenting the award is PTA District 5 Director BOB CUSTER.



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Although it might not come down to getting your mouth washed out with soap, as a hunter, what and how you say something influences the way our favorite pastime is viewed by others.

Watch Your Mouth

AS A WRITER, I pay attention to words — how I use them and how others employ them. English is a continually amazing language, full of word choice and diversity. Modern American English has Germanic and Roman origins, throwing in Celtic, Native American, Yiddish and an array of ancient Indo-European word roots. The best English teacher I had taught us Greek and Latin building blocks of words, as an extra “treat” for the class (his real subject was English literature). I don’t remember much about the *Canterbury Tales* and can quote little *Macbeth*, but thanks to his instruction I can make educated guesses on the meaning of difficult words I encounter.

After his class, I remember realizing that the commercial name “Pyrex” was a joining of the Greek and Latin words for “fire” and “king.” I thought how clever that was for a baking dish company. “Synchronous” is from roots meaning “same” or “together” (syn) and “time” (chronos), so the word means “happening at the same time.” “Peripatetic” was easy for me to figure out because my teacher’s Greek and Latin instruction told me it had to mean “walking around.” The prefix “peri-” meant “round” and “patetic” has to do with walking.

A synonym for “peripatetic” is “itinerant.” But the words are not interchange-

able. “Peripatetic” is a formal, even scholarly word, which has a history that goes back to the teaching methods of Aristotle. He discussed subjects with his pupils while walking about. “Itinerant” has a shadier meaning nowadays and calls to mind aimless wandering, being unsettled, maybe too shiftless to stay in one place. Culture and custom are splitting the words, and they are going their separate ways in the language, with a widening difference in understanding to those who hear them.

The wonder of English is that it has so many synonyms (the word “synonym” is from roots that mean “same” and “name”). The language is a veritable candy store of choices to its users. But the wide-ranging background of its words causes problems. English synonyms can rarely be exchanged for each other and maintain the same sense. I just looked up “itinerant” in the *Thesaurus* and found its synonyms include “nomadic” and “journeying.” But if I go on a journey, I don’t consider myself a nomad, just on vacation.

The word choices that are used to describe hunting often say less about the act than about the state of mind and opinion of the speaker or writer. Or they reveal his lack of attention to what is coming out of his mouth.

Someone might say: “The hunter shot

the deer.” He might also say: “The armed assassin murdered the defenseless creature.” Or he might say: “The fearless hero triumphed over the savage beast.” Or again: “The individual dispatched the antlered ungulate.”

If we have had the normal American upbringing and societal education, we know what we’re supposed to feel with each of those statements. They all describe the act of a person killing a deer, but each influences (some heavy handedly) the way we view that happening. Someone who causes a death can be described as an assassin, a murderer, an executioner, a butcher, but he can also be a combatant, a warrior, a hero or champion. And he can be a hunter or sportsman, something entirely different from the former terms, with none of the hell or heaven they imply, but more natural and earthier. In the last quote, “individual dispatched” takes all the blood from the hunting kill and weakens the undeniable truth of the death.

Synonyms are sneaky — like fanged, writhing snakes in uncertain hands, as likely to bite the handler as anyone else. Synonyms are often let loose without forethought of what they might do. On the other hand, synonyms used as purposeful

propaganda not only twist facts, but also direct emotions, sometimes with the listener or reader scarcely knowing he is being manipulated. In the case of “the hunter killed the deer,” to further his own ends, a propagandist might instead choose synonyms that the deer was murdered, executed, butchered, slaughtered, smashed, slain, killed, shot, dispatched, bagged, tagged, harvested, gotten and garnered. Shades of meaning gradate from one end of the synonym spectrum to the other, but how different and distant is black from white. As with most extremes, the farthest reaches are distortions, while the middle comes closest to the neutral-tone truth.

We might not be able to control others’ word choices, but we can control our own. What do you say when you tell about the deer you shot last year? Would someone listening in get the true sense of your hunt, or are you taking them down a side road you don’t intend to, because of the words you choose? Maybe the sound a bullet makes striking hide is a “whack,” and maybe you don’t mean much more than that if you say you “whacked a deer,” but “whack” sounds flippant, an uncaring slap, an angry smash. What you did was take the life of that animal, under honorable fair chase conditions (or so I would hope), and you know that. But is that what your words tell others or are you sending a sport-injuring message?

How do you describe your rifle or shotgun? Is it a “weapon?” Assuming that “weapon” was interchangeable with “gun,” I often used the term until an editor educated me. “Weapon,” he said, is more a word for what is used to kill or destroy in warfare, including sabers and nuclear bombs. And we’re not, of course, at war with wildlife. “Call it a firearm,

THE WORDS we choose to describe our deer kill affect how others view hunting and say something about our regard for the sport.

Linda Steiner



if you need a synonym," he told me, "or just say it's a .30-30 or a lever action." "Fire-arm" always left out bows and arrows, so sometimes I'd lump them as "hunting implements." That's a mouthful and sounds wimpy, though. Maybe "sporting arms?"

I get a kick out of people who ask me if I "caught" a deer this year. To them, both game animals and fish are caught. I get a mental picture of chasing after a buck with a butterfly net. But their phrasing, although wrong in today's context, isn't so far off. The word "catch" is related to "chase" and "capture," from French and Latin roots. I remember from my school years that "la chasse" is the French word for "the hunt." This has helped me explain to nonhunters that hunting is more about "seeking out, trying to find, chasing after," than killing; just look where the word comes from. "Hunt," I also found out, goes back to old English "huntian" or "hentan," meaning to seize or try to seize. So those who ask me if I caught a deer are, etymologically at least, correct, though that is far off from what actually happens in the deer woods in 2001.

A good dictionary (I use *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate*) can make intriguing reading about the origins, current use and tweaks of meaning in our words. I also have the *Dictionary of Word Origins*, histories of English language words. I often refer to the Outdoor Writers Association of America's *Outdoor Style Manual* when I'm not sure what sporting term is correct, but few non-outdoor publication editors own one. I wish they did (perhaps I should buy one for my newspaper editor) so they wouldn't think a handgun, a pistol, a revolver and a six-shooter are all the same thing. A handgun might be an autoloader, with semiautomatic reloading action. And they wouldn't

try to correct my using scattergun and smoothbore as synonyms for shotgun, because they would know it's all the same thing.

Game animals are neither "defenseless creatures" nor "savage beasts." They are wild animals that because of their sporting



Bob D'Angelo

HUNTERS are neither saints nor sinners, assassins nor heroes, but simply people taking part in a timeless activity that connects them to the outdoor world in a basic, human way.

challenge, like speed or wariness, and usefulness for food or fur have been designated as legal game. Intriguingly, the word "savage" has lost its birthright meaning. It came from the Latin "silvaticus," "of the woods." Savage actually means something living in the forest wild, not necessarily with the brutal, sharp fangs the word currently makes us conjure up.

"A rose by any other name" is not always a rose. Hunting has been called many names by the malevolent and misunderstanding, all synonyms that my computer program's Thesaurus will kick out, but too bloodily hurtful or palely sanitized to be the real thing. Hunters are neither saints nor sinners, assassins nor heroes, but simply people taking part in a timeless activity that connects them to the outdoor world in a basic, human way. Words can wound or can bring salvation, even to your favorite sport, so watch your mouth. □

Marcia treads upon some unfamiliar ground while examining the newly surveyed boundaries of her mountain home.

Walking the Lines

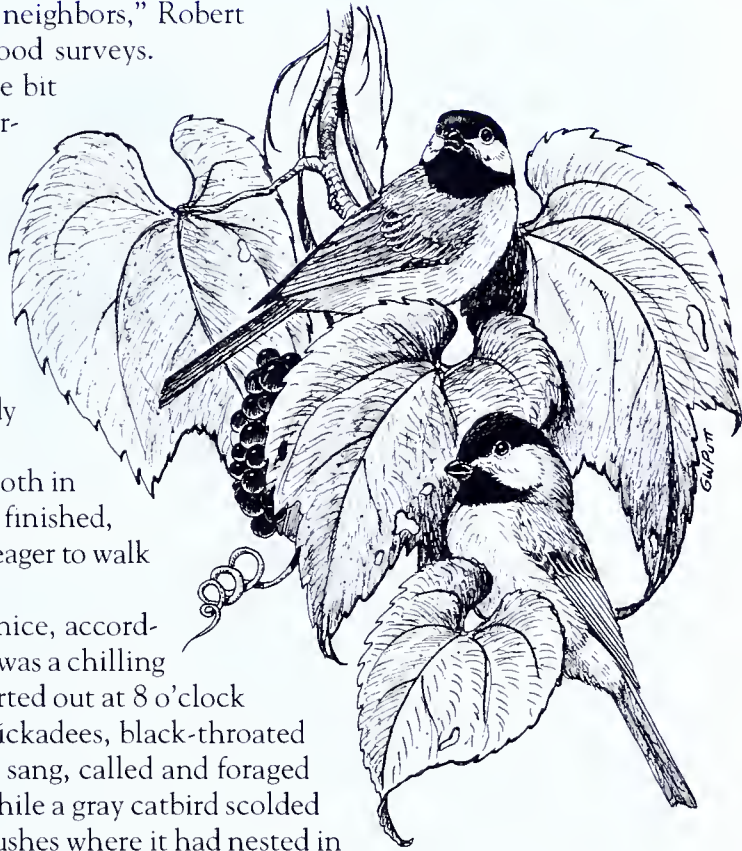
GOOD FENCES make good neighbors," Robert Frost once wrote. So do good surveys. After procrastinating for years, we bit the financial bullet and hired a surveyor to survey our mountain property. The surveyor was the same one who had surveyed a portion of our property years ago, when we bought some more acreage. He had also surveyed another bordering neighbor's property, so we figured he already had a head start on the job.

Finally, after months of work, both in the field and the courthouse, he finished, and my husband Bruce and I were eager to walk the lines he had marked.

September 25 promised to be nice, according to the weather forecast, but it was a chilling 44 degrees and misty when we started out at 8 o'clock in the morning. Black-capped chickadees, black-throated green warblers and tufted titmice sang, called and foraged in the yard's black walnut trees, while a gray catbird scolded from the depths of the forsythia bushes where it had nested in early summer. Blue jays and eastern towhees called on Sapsucker Ridge, and white-tailed deer played tag in First Field.

We crossed First Field — still bright with goldenrod — and stopped to examine fat, torpid bumblebees clinging to the flowers, waiting for the day's promised warmth to rouse them. Halfway through Margaret's Woods, we turned left on to the Steiner/Scott Trail, which we had named in honor of two men who had hunted on this section of the property most of their lives.

As we ascended Sapsucker Ridge, a cardinal *chipped* in alarm at us, an always merry-sounding Carolina wren called and sang, and eastern towhees continued their antiphonal calling. A tangle of Pennsylvania smartweed blanketed the trail, while hay-scented



ferns grew along the trail's edge and spilled over the bank. Tempting bunches of grapes dangled from wild vines twining over black locust saplings, and then we hit the dead zone of fall webworms. Entire trees and shrubs were swathed in shroud-like webs, the worst outbreak we had seen in many years.

Fall webworms are the offspring of small, white moths that over-winter as lacy, brown-colored cocoons in the soil. The moths emerge in May, mate, and the females then lay clusters of eggs on the undersides of tree leaves. Those eggs hatch into hairy, grayish caterpillars with shiny, reddish-brown heads, a series of double black dots on their backs and reddish-brown dots along their sides. They immediately crawl to the tip ends of tree branches where they spin their webs as self-protection while they eat the leaves.

The late June brood is barely noticeable, because it does little damage, but every seven to ten years the late brood in August and September runs amok. The leaves, though, have almost completed their cycle and will soon drop, so fall webworms do minimal damage to trees. Although they will eat any deciduous tree leaves, they favor wild black cherry, black walnut, and domestic fruit trees on our mountain, but when we reached the mountaintop and turned left on Big Tree Trail, we found that webworms had also denuded witch hazel trees as well as every cherry tree along the ridge. Despite what the experts say, our fall webworms have never eaten oak leaves, so we were able to stop and admire the 44-inch diameter red oak for which the trail is named.

Eventually, the trail met the first of the

orange surveyor marks, and we were finally walking the line. Big Tree Trail sloped down toward First Field while we continued straight ahead on Sapsucker Ridge Trail through a forest dominated by large black cherry trees. Noise from I-99 and the railroad below was amplified by thick valley fog. The promised warmth and sunshine never materialized. Instead, a cold fog billowed in from the south as we walked along the ridge top.

Once, we stopped to look at "holey water," as Peter Marchand called it in a recent *Natural History* article. This water found in tree holes sometimes contains "hidden reservoirs of biodiversity," Marchand says, nurturing as many as 140 species of protozoa, flagellate algae, bacteria and aquatic larval invertebrates, such as mosquitoes, moth flies, wood gnats, midges, punkies, marsh beetles and syrphid flies.

The best tree holes are those that occur where trees grow together at the base, such as the twin chestnut oak tree we looked at. It had grafted together to form a catchment's basin called a pan at its juncture and was lined with seamless, waterproof bark tissue.

But tree holes also develop in a single tree if the bark is injured, such as in the black birch tree hole we discovered next. Fungi and bacteria enter the tree, creating a hole by decay that the tree walls off with callus tissue, again forming a cavity large enough to hold water. Still other single tree holes form when branches break off during wind and ice storms.

There are tree holes and then there are outstanding tree holes. The two we had found had the necessary stem flow trails down the bark that channel rainwater into the holes, carrying nutrients from leaves and bark. Autumn leaf fall supplies the rest



of the energy tree-hole communities need to survive, but the amount of water and leaves must be carefully balanced. If there is too much organic matter, it lowers the number of species and density of populations because it soaks up too much water.

Even though I poked a stick into the organic soup of moldering leaves, it was difficult to tell whether our tree holes contained enough of the needed balance to provide a food chain from protozoan to marsh beetle larvae, the keystone species of tree holes. All I could see was a drowned fall webworm in the chestnut oak tree hole and a drowned green caterpillar in the black birch.

We left the tree holes near the Sapsucker Ridge Trail to follow the line, maneuvering over large, moss-covered rocks. Clumps of white birches growing on the ridge top were already an autumn yellow and covered with seed cones. Early autumnal color — the brilliant orange, crimson, purple and gold of black gum — decked the forest understory.

As we walked, an almost steady stream of deer ran off. Chipmunks chipped and gray squirrels scolded. All were no doubt drawn by the acorns pelting down in the chilly breeze.

Finally, we reached the middle of Second Thicket, the end of our line on Sapsucker Ridge, and turned left down the steep ridge, accompanied by the calls of American robins and blue jays. Slipping and sliding, we passed wild grapevines overhanging Hercules club trees and, because this area had been logged by a neighbor before our survey, abundant hay-scented ferns and Japanese barberry shrubs. What had once been a diverse thicket of trees and shrubs that provided shade for 100 jack-in-the-pulpits in the spring, was now an example of what happens when logging — instead of forestry — is practiced. Aliens like barberry invaded, and no new trees germinated under the blanket of ferns. At least the dead snags provided places for wild grapes to hang from, and the Hercules

clubs bore clumps of berries for wildlife. Still, I remember what it once was and mourned its earlier, more vibrant life.

From there we made our way back to the Far Field thicket, only a small portion of which we own, and found a fresh deer scrape marked by a dangling grapevine. We continued through our section of the oak-dominated Far Field forest to Roseberry Hollow and climbed steeply down and up and finally on through a more recent, “take any tree that is worth taking” logging effort by another neighbor.

Twenty-five years before, the landowner had the mountaintop oak forest “thinned.” All trees 12 inches or more in diameter were cut. Now, what little had been left had been dragged off, leaving an understory of mountain laurel and huckleberry partially shaded by a few crooked oaks, two groves of spindly black birches that sprang up after the previous logging, a scattering of red maples, and the recently sprouted black locust trees.

The 2-year-old slash was still difficult to walk through, so we followed the line by walking along our Laurel Ridge Trail and looking over at the blazes. We also took the time to find the old corner post our surveyor had found.

After we crossed the powerline right-of-way, leaving the devastated land behind, we followed our trail system — mostly an extension of Laurel Ridge Trail — another mile to the end of the mountain. This is also an oak-dominated forest with an understory of mountain laurel.

Along the trail we found a recently fallen tree ripped apart by a bear, and we continued to scatter deer like confetti. When we stopped to eat our lunch we heard a flock of keening cedar waxwings.

Near the end of Laurel Ridge, over the continual beeping of trucks from the valley limestone quarry, Bruce said, “Cup your ears. Hear the geese going over?” And indeed they were heading south that cool, overcast day.

In the grapevines just over the edge of

the mountaintop, I sat down and watched a foraging flock of black-capped chickadees, eastern towhees, cedar waxwings and a gray catbird. Best of all, though, was an immature magnolia warbler that moved in and out of sight among the vines and tree branches.

We followed the line down the mountain a couple hundred feet before it became too steep. We knew, however, that the survey line dropped down to the railroad tracks and then followed around the end of the mountain to the highway. From there it continued along the interstate fence until it cut straight back up Sapsucker Ridge to the top of the Steiner/Scott Trail where we had started our walk hours before.

That steep mountainside area above the highway has the biggest trees on the mountain, but we never go into it. Aesthetically, it is unappealing because of the noise from the railroad and the interstate, but the wildlife seem to have no trouble with either aesthetics or challenging terrain.

So, instead of walking the rest of the line, we returned home by taking Black Gum Trail on Laurel Ridge, dropping down into the silence of the hollow, leaving behind the din from the town, the valley, and the nonstop traffic on the growing web of highways at the base of the mountain.

I found a couple of American chestnuts on the ground and traced them to a tree seven inches in diameter. The chestnuts' spiny exteriors had been broken open and

the nuts extracted, proof that at least some wild critters knew how to harvest what had once been the most abundant fall crop for wildlife.

As we walked the final mile on this meandering trail through a mature, mixed-oak forest, red-bellied woodpeckers and blue jays called as they harvested acorns from the trees, while squirrels and chipmunks foraged on the ground. By then I felt the strain of the more difficult than usual walk and collapsed for a short rest on my favorite double chestnut oak with a tree hole that had long ago dried up and now formed a perfect seat for me.

At last I dragged my weary bones home, after five and a half rugged miles, proud to have walked at least a portion of our line, exploring both familiar and unfamiliar ground. Our surveyor had closed the lines on our property and, as we had expected, we had gained some land and lost some land. Now, when I walk the trails I have walked almost daily for more than 30 years, I can be confident of our property lines.

In Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," it is his neighbor who insists on rebuilding the stonewall that marks their property line. So they agree one day to meet "to walk the line and set the wall between us as we go." Frost thinks the line is obvious. So did we once. But we have to agree with the neighbor who wants a clear, definite line, who says again, "Good fences make good neighbors." □

COVER PAINTING BY BOB SOPCHICK

WHAT IS MORE splendid than the autumn woodlands in Pennsylvania? The northern hardwoods ablaze with color — leaves of yellow poplar and hickory, yellow; white oak, russet; and maples, scarlet. And what better way to take it all in than by sitting at the base of a stout tree with a .22 rifle across your lap, waiting for that telltale rustle of leaves of a bushytail feeding on the ground.

Hunters and art collectors who always wanted a print of a gray squirrel but couldn't find one will be pleased that this month's cover is available as a limited edition print. "Bushytail" is being offered in an edition of 500 signed and numbered prints. Image size is 10x14½ inches and prints are \$50 each; 50 artist proofs are available for \$60. Remarques are available for an additional \$25. Shipping is \$12 and Pennsylvania residents must add 6% state sales tax. Order from Bob Sopchick Studios, P.O. Box 3463, York, PA 17402-0463.

Straight from the Bowstring

By P.J. Reilly

By keeping tabs on the ladies, sooner or later, and it probably will be later, "Mr. Right" is going to show up.

Want Bucks? "Hunt" the Does

AS BOWHUNTERS, we spend a great deal of time searching for buck rubs and scrapes, trying to determine their freshness and wondering when and if the buck that made them will return. We know the buck probably will revisit these signposts, but we can't be certain. And what if the buck returns at night? That doesn't do us any good. What if we could set up in an area where we know for certain a buck eventually will show? Wouldn't it be nice to eliminate a lot of the guessing? Guess what, it can be done. Find does and you'll find bucks.

Adult does and yearlings tend to stick together during the fall. These groups have predictable habits and are found near food, water and cover. Bucks, on the other hand, are solitary and tend to roam during the fall. They could be anywhere at any time. One place you can count on bucks eventually showing up once the rut kicks in, however, is where the does hang out.

My hunting partner, J.R., and I had spent several shifts on stand in a particular woodlot throughout the early 2000 archery season. Time after time we watched the same group of does and yearlings file out of

a swamp and head to nearby farm fields every evening, and vice versa in the morning. We never spotted any antlers, though.

"We have to find some bucks," J.R. said, eager to tag his first buck with a bow. "Let's try another property."

"I'm telling you, J.R., there are so many does in here, a buck has to show up sooner or later," I said. "Let's wait it out."

When no bucks had been sighted by either of us by Tuesday of the last week of the fall season, I was beginning to wonder if one would show up before our time ran out. J.R. and I took up our usual stands in the woodlot Tuesday morning and, like clockwork, a long string of antlerless deer filed past us, heading for the swamp. Once again, no buck was with the group.



LOCATING groups of antlerless deer can be as simple as driving country roads in the evening. Find the does and sooner or later a buck is bound to show up.

About 8 a.m., five antlerless deer came barreling through the woods, stopped at the edge of the swamp, and then scattered in all directions. A big doe stood stone still in front of me with its ears and eyes locked on a thicket to my right. I noticed a large form moving behind the brush. A deer stepped out and immediately attacked a small sapling. It was a buck.

After a little calling and a lot of waiting, the buck finally came close enough for a shot. The 8-point ran only 30 yards before collapsing. By the end of the fall archery season four days later, J.R. and I spotted three more bucks in that small woodlot. (J.R. failed to connect on one, however.)

Finding the places where does like to congregate during the early part of the archery season is fairly easy. In mid to late September, start driving the roads around your hunting area during the evening and look for deer feeding in open areas such as farm fields, food plots and power lines. Once you've located a herd, go back another evening a bit earlier than the previous trip. You want to get to the feeding area before the deer do, so you can pinpoint where they emerge from the woods. Once you've done that, go back another day long before evening and enter the woods where you saw the deer come out. Obviously, you don't want to do this in the evening, when the deer are out, because you don't want to spook them out of the area.

Whenever I enter the woods on a scouting mission, I act just like I'm going hunting. I take all sorts of precautions to mask my scent, wearing rubber boots and spraying myself with a cover scent. Deer — especially does — seem to know when they're being scouted. Leave a lot of human scent on their favorite trail before the season starts, and you can bet that trail will get real cold real quick. Once you're on the deer trail, select several trees as stand sites. Be sure to pick trees on both sides of the trail, so you have a stand location no matter which way the wind is blowing; always hunt downwind from the trail.

Once you're set on where to hunt in the evenings, it's time to find a morning spot. Start with the premise that the trail the deer use in the evening to go to feeding areas is the one they'll use to return to bedding areas in the morning. If my evening spot is near a field, however, I don't hunt there in the morning because I'm afraid of spooking the deer that are feeding. I like to go deeper in the woods in the morning.

To find a place to hunt in the morning, I'll go on a mock hunt. On a mock hunt, I do everything I would on a bowhunt, except carry a bow. The idea is to get a bird's-eye view of deer movements, and select stand sites based on what's observed.

Being right on top of deer during a mock hunt is not important. In fact, it can be a bad thing. You might alert the deer to your presence. When I go on a mock hunt, I pick a tree for my stand that affords me the greatest visibility. I want to see as much of the woods as possible, so I can identify the hottest trails.

Besides locating prime deer trails, bowhunters would do well to find doe staging areas. These are areas in the woods where does and their young congregate before heading to their bedding areas in the morning and before moving out to feed again in the evening. The staging area seems to be a place where different family groups socialize before going about their business. Young deer cavort, while the adult does keep a nervous watch for danger. It's the perfect place to count on intercepting a rutting buck sooner or later.

In the farm country where I hunt, staging areas seem to be pockets of open woods where there are lots of acorn-laden oaks. In the mountains, I've found them in wooded creek bottoms and on high benches. It's important to note that the favored staging areas seem to shift as hunters close in on them. It's up to you to keep up with the deer.

When you're on stand during the season, consider every hunt a scouting mission. Watch where the does go in order to

stay on their trail. If you notice the herd has shifted its primary travel corridor, then you need to shift as well. If they consistently hang around the same areas, then you need to stay with them. Sure, it's going to get boring, watching the same group over and over without seeing any "horns," but you have to be patient. Place your trust in the breeding instinct; it's very strong. Sooner or later a buck will show up.

One season a few years ago I found a point at the end of a small ridge in a woods where a large group of does gathered every day around 8 a.m. to munch on acorns. On the opening day of archery season that year,

I sat in my treestand as 13 bald deer milled around beneath me for the better part of two hours. Two weeks later I shot a 4-point that followed the herd to that point. And two weeks after that a hunting buddy collected a 7-point there. During my preseason scouting missions, I never saw any bucks on that point, nor did I see any buck sign. All I saw were does, so I figured a buck would show up. Two did.

Hunting over red-hot scrapes and fresh buck rubs is a good way to ambush a buck, but I'd just as soon hunt over a herd of does and wait for a buck to be carried into bow range on the winds of the fall rut. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Woodie Watch

Place the correct letter to each answer in the space, and then copy the letters in the space below and unscramble to complete the statement.

- _____ A drake wood duck's plumage is C) drab brown T) brightly colored
- _____ Populations plummeted in the early 1900s due to E) habitat destruction
I) demand for feathers O) overhunting A) all three
- _____ An adult wood duck weighs about N) 5 pounds P) 3 pounds
M) 1.5 pounds
- _____ A favorite food is F) berries G) acorns H) grass
- _____ Hen wood ducks U) quack L) sing I) squeal
- _____ Wood ducks can fly at speeds of R) 45-50 mph S) 15-20 mph
T) 80-100 mph
- _____ The wood duck's recovery was due to V) manmade nest structures
W) wetland restoration X) regulated hunting Y) all three
- _____ Its scientific name *Aix sponsa* means C) "beloved waterfowl"
O) "waterfowl in wedding dress"
- _____ Wood ducks are considered R) dabblers S) divers

Copy the letters here and then unscramble. _____

Wood ducks are considered _____ birds.

answers on p. 64

The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

Many of the younger crowd might not realize that milk was once delivered in bottles with cardboard caps. It's that small disc that provided the inspiration to begin a shooting competition.

Bottle Cap Shoot

WHEN I was a teenager several friends and I competed in backyard .22 Long Rifle shooting matches. We simply dreamed up different types of targets and shooting distances. There was nothing organized, so to speak.

One of our favorite shoots was at rolling tin cans. Three or four cans were placed on the edge of a fairly steep bank, roughly 40 feet from the shooter and were held in place by a stick. The first shot was at the stick, and usually when hit, the cans would roll down the embankment. The shooter then fired at the rolling cans. It took speed to get two shots at the rolling cans, because they rolled only about 10 feet to the bottom of the bank. This kind of shooting was a lot of fun, but it was more luck than good shooting, because it depended on the way the cans rolled down the embankment. If they bounced or tumbled, it was next to impossible to hit even one.

Most challenging was trying, from the offhand position, to drive a thumbtack into a board at about 35 feet. This was not easy, especially considering that we used open sights. If my memory is correct, the tack always seemed to be in the wrong place for me. The few tacks I hit pale in comparison to the ones I missed. Still, it honed my shooting skills, and that's the purpose of target shooting.



THE TARGET used in a bottle cap shoot is a plain white disc, and each shooter is allowed to put a small aiming circle or dot in the middle. The object is to get as close to center as possible; dead center is called a zero.

Target shooting has always played a major role in the firearm realm. It's fair to say that everyone has a little bit of the competitive spirit. Some type of competitive shooting probably began shortly after the shoulder weapon made its appearance, and we know that the first settlers held a variety of shooting matches. In William Hintzen's *The Border Wars of the Upper Ohio Valley* (1769-1794) he tells about powder being sent to protect a fort, with the un-

derstanding that it would be kept in the blockhouse, where it could not be pilfered by militia or used by settlers for hunting nor burned up in one of the frontiersmen's favorite pastimes — target shooting or “diverting at marks.”

Indoor .22 Long Rifle matches are still popular today and, not that long ago, just about every town had an indoor team. When I was in high school during the 1930s many schools had shooting teams. The Winchester 52, and Remington's 37 and 513T held sway for many years. In the early 1950s, Mossberg offered their Model 144 Match rifle at a much lower price than either the Winchester or Remington target rifles. I've been told that some high school rifle teams used the Mossberg 144 exclusively.

I had a close friend who was a dedicated competitor. He used a Winchester 52 and turned in some pretty impressive scores. One evening he brought his rifle to my shop to see if I could determine why it was prone to throwing fliers. He claimed he had tried three or four brands of target ammo, but the fliers continued. When I asked him how it shot after a good cleaning, he looked up at the ceiling and meekly replied he couldn't remember the last time he had scrubbed the bore.

To make a long story short, we spent more than a half hour scrubbing the bore

with a tight fitting brass brush and a lead removing solution. I'm sure we didn't get all the lead out (that's not a joke), but we did open the bore somewhat. Several weeks later he called to say the fliers had stopped, that the old 52 was back on center.

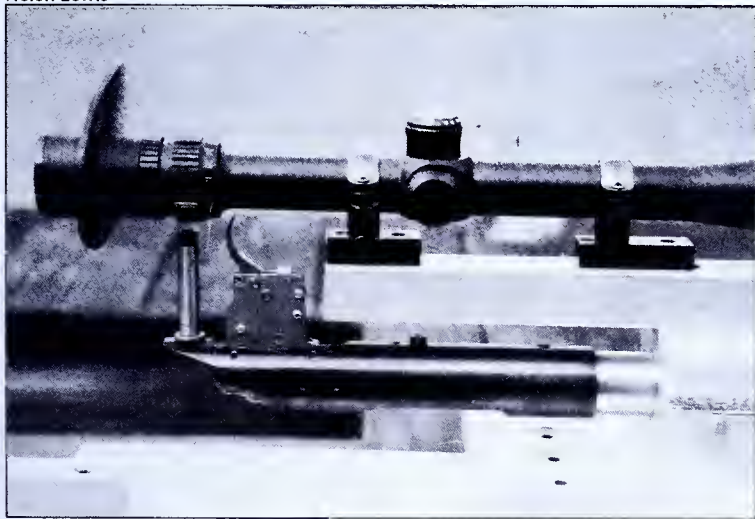
Trying to cover the entire realm of .22 Long Rifle match shooting is far beyond the scope of this column. However, an interesting bit of competition that is exceptionally challenging is bottle cap shooting. The strange part is that it has been around for decades, but only a few shooters are aware of this competition. My rifle-building friend, Jim Peightal, got involved and thought that many hunters and shooters across Pennsylvania might want to participate.

Jim shoots at two clubs, one in Blairsville and the other at Fort Hand, which is close to Apollo. Fort Hand is approximately 16 miles from where I live, so Helen and I visited the shoot on a Monday night to learn the ins and outs of bottle cap shooting.

No one at the club was certain when the first bottle cap shoot took place at Fort Hand, but Bob Shamberger, who more or less oversees the shoot, thought it might have started in the late 1940s. Ernie Anderson attended his first shoot in 1957, and has been a regular ever since. Fort Hand has about 45 members, and not all the competitors are members,

but they are welcome to take part in the shoots. The range layout con-

Helen Lewis



JIM PEIGHTAL'S “upside down” rifle he uses for bottle cap shooting is built on a Remington 40x action with a Bison 22-inch stainless barrel and a Hart 2-ounce trigger. A Bausch & Lomb 8-32x scope completes the outfit, which weighs 35 pounds.

DON LEWIS's book *The Shooter's Corner* has been reprinted, including a 32-page update. The book covers a wide array of shooting, hunting and ballistic subjects of interest to hunters and shooters. *The Shooter's Corner* is informative, factual and easy to read, and between its covers, there is something for the avid shooter and hunter as well as the beginner. Order the book from Precision Shooting, 222 McKee Street, Manchester, CT 06040 for \$27.95 plus \$3.50 shipping and handling.

rifle pushed forward on the table or placed on the rack above the table. When all competitors have finished the first round, the targets are retrieved and shots measured. When the measuring is finished, a hole is punched in the disc to keep it from being used again.

sists of six shooting benches and a table with a rack above and in front of each bench. The distance from the bench to the target is 60 feet.

I assume the shoot got its name from the target used. The target is a plain white disc (approximately the same size as the cardboard cap used years ago on glass milk bottles), and each shooter is allowed to put a small aiming circle or dot in the middle. For instance, Jim Peightal has a jig that draws a small circle and also puts a tiny dot in the middle of the circle. The object is to get as close to center as possible; dead center is called a zero.

Each shooter takes one shot at his target, and then the bolt is opened and the

Measuring is actually done by the shooters. For instance the top three shooters of the first round are designated judges and measure the first six rounds. One judge measures, the second writes the score and the third punches a hole in the target. After round seven, three more judges are selected to measure during the rest of the shoot. If it happens the same three judges are tops on the seventh round, the next three top shooters become judges. This means that six judges are involved in the measuring of the 13 shots.

The measuring instrument is a heavy brass device that incorporates a dial indicator. A round piece of brass rotates, and a pin protrudes through the brass wheel. The measuring official pushes the pin through the bullet hole onto the wheel, which places the edge of the cardboard target resting against the dial indicator. A brass knob is firmly pushed down over the pin and against the target. While pressure is applied evenly, the target is slowly turned, and the dial indicator shows (in thousandths of an inch) how far off center the bullet hole is. For all practical purposes, a target can be read accurately only one time. Pushing the target a second or third time over the pin enlarges the hole, and might give a different reading. I noticed that a great deal of care was used to get the first readout.

The shoot consists of 12 shots per shooter. The 13th round, known as the dime round, is fired to break ties.



Helen Lewis

THE MEASURING instrument used in the bottle cap shoot incorporates a dial indicator that shows in thousandths of an inch how far off center the shot is.

The winner of that round gets a dime for each shooter participating. Although it's unlikely, it's possible for the winner of the dime round to also be the winner of the first 12 shots. This is a bit complicated, but here is how the scoring goes.

Let's say that one shooter fires 12 shots that measure 50 thousandth each. Adding up the 12 shots gives the shooter a percentage of 600. If no other shooter gets a lower percentage, the 600 shooter is the winner. The 13th round is fired (even if there isn't a tie) to get a winner for the dime round.

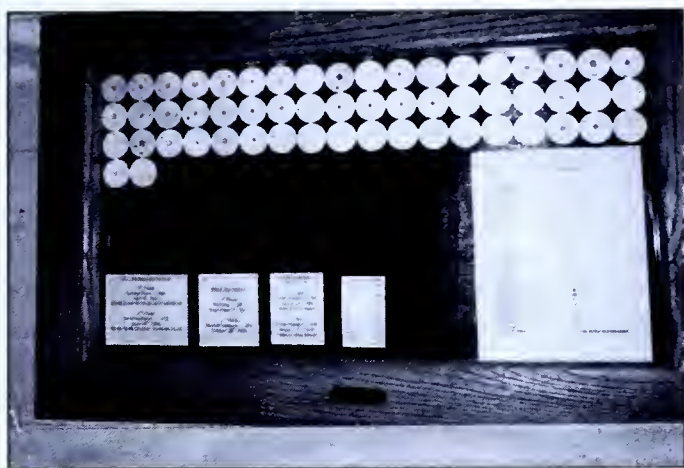
In other words, there are two winners for each match.

The cost to shoot is \$6.10 per match. It's not a big money shoot. The total pay-out the week before my visit totaled \$48.65. It's not the money, but rather the competition that makes the shoot exciting. Although shooters are good friends, they leave no stone unturned to beat each other. Maybe a shooter didn't win the match, but if he had a lower percentage than his favorite buddy, he's satisfied.

The rifles used are basically match type rifles including Winchester 52s, Remington 40XBs and the Model 54 Anschutzs. There are no limitations on rifle weight or power of scope used. Normally, each rifle is equipped with a set of front legs and an adjusting screw on the bottom rear of the stock. Sandbags are permitted, but the leg set-up is superior.

Peightal built a rifle in which the firing pin strikes the bottom of the case rim instead of the top (the reason is too complex for this article). It's a heavy barrel mounted on thick plates of aluminum. It won't win any beauty contests, with its trigger sticking up from the top, but it really lays them in. It weighs 35 pounds — not exactly a squirrel rifle.

A vast majority of the shooters agreed



Helen Lewis

A GLASS CASE at the Fort Hand clubhouse contains the "zero" targets that have been fired over the years. Shooting a zero is the quest of every competitor, but it's not an easy feat.

that the prime factor is the ammunition. For one thing, the .22 Long Rifle is eccentric to start with, and trying to put 12 shots that stay under 30 thousandths of an inch from dead center requires consistent ammo. Even a change in room temperature can slide a bullet a few thousandths off center.

The score sheet given to me from a past shoot showed a winning score (percentage) of 543. Getting a percentage below 400 is the dream of every competitor, but it's not likely to happen. Over the last decade, fewer than 20 shooters fired a zero, and only a handful got down to or slightly below the 400 thousandth mark. Ernie Anderson showed me one of his best scores — a 473 fired back in 1985.

As an aside, Ernie asked Helen to try his Remington 40XB topped with a 32x Unertl. Helen never passes up a chance to shoot, and after much shifting and aiming, she fired. "Not bad," someone said after the target had been measured. "She fired a 45." Another shooter quipped that he would gladly take 12 45s any day of the week. That would give a percentage of 540.

Women shooters are welcome, but one fellow kidded Helen, saying that it might be better if she stuck with photography. Now, why do you think he said that? □

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

Although the gun industry has invested heavily in websites to promote its products and services, firearm buyers, who make up the majority of the market, are among the lowest users of the Internet.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that U.S. hunters bagged 15,770,400 ducks during the 1999-00 season — down seven percent from the previous season's record harvest. The most common species taken were mallards, 35 percent; green-winged teal, 14 percent; gadwalls, 11 percent; wood ducks, 10 percent; and blue-winged/cinnamon teal, 7 percent.

There were 46 California condors — the largest bird in the U.S. — in the wild as of mid-year 2000, which is notable, considering there were only 27 — all living in captivity — just 13 years ago. A few years ago, however, there were about 60 free-flying condors, but some have died from lead poisoning, the result of feeding on dead animals that had been killed with lead shot or bullets. Other condors have died as a result of injuries inflicted by golden eagles, while others are returned to captivity because of adjustment difficulties.

Under a new, 11-state reciprocal agreement, a convicted poacher who has hunting or fishing privileges revoked in one state automatically loses them in all the other member states as well. States participating in the Wildlife Violator Compact are Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. It's hoped a nationwide compact can be formed in the future.

Eighteen states permit using dogs to hunt turkeys in the fall. Those are California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan (Upper Peninsula only), Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.

Hunters in North Dakota bagged 258,335 rooster pheasants in 1999 — up 18 percent from the 1998 harvest.

Pheasant hunters in Iowa took nearly 900,000 pheasants during the 1999-00 season — a 27 percent decline from the previous season. This marks the first time since 1995 that Iowa has not led the nation in pheasant harvests. (South Dakota led the nation during the 1999-00 season, with an estimated 1.5 million pheasants taken.) The number of cottontail rabbits harvested in Iowa was down seven percent during the 1999-00 season, but the bobwhite quail harvest increased nine percent.

Nationwide, more than 20,000 people are injured and more than 144 die each year as a result of wildlife-related auto collisions. The most dangerous states in wildlife/auto incident frequency are Michigan, New York, Georgia and Wisconsin, Ohio and Illinois. Pennsylvania was not in the top 12.

**Answer: TAMGIRYOR
MIGRATORY.**

WORKING TOGETHER FOR WILDLIFE

THE WATCHER, by Marie

Girio Brummett, is this year's Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. New to Pennsylvania, coyotes are cloaked in mystique. Some people despise them for their predatory habits, others admire them for their intelligence, adaptability and tenacity.



PRINTS are on acid-free, 100 percent rag paper; image is 15 x 22½

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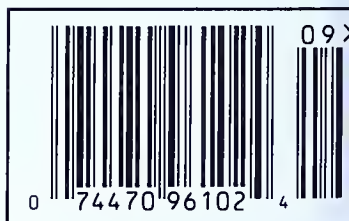
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Thank you, Pennsylvania Game Commission

As the Junior grand prize winner in the 2000 Youth Essay Contest, I recently returned from the YO Ranch in San Antonio, Texas. I was there for eight days in the beginning of July. It was all I expected it to be and more. I wanted to write a thank you letter to you and the staff of the Game Commission. In addition to the plaques and awards that I received from my first visit to the Game Commission headquarters, I really enjoyed meeting so many Game Commission personnel in person.

I want to tell you about my stay at the YO Ranch. First, I went on my first ever plane ride, flying to Texas. That was a thrill in itself. After getting unpacked at the ranch, which is a working cattle ranch, we learned how to saddle and bridle horses and how to ride. There were hours upon hours of hunting related classes, such as compass reading and map reading, how to track wounded game animals, identifying game animals and birds, and how to use game calls. We also got to see many hunting videos.

Life on the ranch was also all natural. We slept in cabins with canvas sides and tin roofs, and we cooked over campfires. All meals were on dinnerware that we brought. For instance, I had a Boy Scout eating kit. No throw-away plastic items or plates were allowed, nor was any candy, soda or other sweets.

We had several guest speakers, such as personnel from Leupold scope company showing us their new scopes and how to use them. We also learned how to use game calls. Another trip of interest was to a taxidermist company, where we were shown how to properly skin and cape animals for mounting.

We did many other things, such as visit exotic game ranches to take photographs of wild animals, fireworks on 4th of July, swimming at their pools, trap shooting, care of rifles and shotguns, marksmanship even at 300 yards. In short, I had a wonderful time, thanks to you.

Oh, yes, during the actual hunting portion of the camp, I was fortunate to bag a large full-curl Corsican ram with one shot.

I will always remember this year and the wonderful things that happened to me. I hope this essay contest continues and many other youngsters get to know the same thrill that I did.

Thank you, again.

Cory Ammerman
Alexandria
Grand Prize Winner
2000 Junior Division

The theme for this year's Hunter Education Youth Essay Contest is "Ways that I can promote hunting." The contest is open to Pennsylvania residents who have successfully completed an accredited hunter-trapper education course. There are two age divisions: Junior (12-15 years of age) and Senior (16 to 18). Entries must be postmarked no later than November 30, 2001. For complete contest details, see page 35 of the 2001-02 Hunting & Trapping Digest, or visit "Hunter Information" on the agency's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us).

letters

Editor:

As an old friend of Carl Jarrett's from the Millerstown area, I was happy to see his picture in the May *Game News*. Carl's father was our minister at Donnally Mills Church, and he was a great joke teller, too. Carl and I went to high school at the same time, but were not in the same class.

I shared the *Game News* with others who also knew and went to school with Carl.

M. ORRIS
SELINGROVE

Editor:

Just finished reading Dave Ehrig's "Powder, Patch and Ball, and now Bullets" in the August issue. After the frustrating time I had a year ago, trying to find an accurate projectile for my flintlock, I now have a better understanding of why I had accuracy problems.

I ended up using a patched roundball, anyway. This article has also given me a better understanding of what to expect by using the various projectile options now permissible by law.

Mr. Ehrig's article was a little long by *Game News* standards, but it was certainly well worth the space.

R. PIPER,
MINERAL POINT

Editor:

Originally from Pennsylvania, my wife and I just returned from visiting your state and found it to be just as beautiful now as we remembered.

While in McKean

County, we planned to take a nice walk in your forests, but were disappointed to find most areas heavily posted.

Pennsylvania's forests used to be available for all to enjoy, but now it seems only the affluent have that right.

B. CHILSON,
PEYTON, CO

Editor:

After reading a copy of *Game News* at the local gym, I became a subscriber. Owning a hair salon, I was interested to see just who would read it. Much to my surprise, I found it very informative, as have other (women) customers. It's helped me to become more aware of wildlife in our area.

As a change in subject — how surprised do you think our neighbors and I were when we began seeing and hearing coyotes?

K. FISHER,
LEWISBURG

Editor:

The Greensburg YMCA Emergency Youth Shelter has been getting *Game News* for ten years, and each month the residents look forward to reading it. One resident even keeps the newest issue in his room until he has memorized the whole thing, then brags about how much he knows about the outdoors.

It's funny how in this age of computers and video games a child can get so much

enjoyment out of learning about the outdoors.

I also would like to thank WCO Rodney Ansell for coming to the shelter and teaching the kids about Pennsylvania's wild animals. The residents enjoyed the time Mr. Ansell spent with them and often ask me to get him to come back. It's small things like this that help the children of our shelter have a more enjoyable stay here while away from home.

R. DRABANT
ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR
GREENSBURG

Editor:

I'm writing this as a tribute to my brother, John, who passed away last year. John was an avid hunter for most of his life, but more important, he introduced many young people to hunting.

For many years, John not only provided a camp from which these young people could hunt, at no charge, he also bought most of the food and did all of the cooking. And he didn't stop there. For those who couldn't afford it, or simply hadn't yet made the commitment, he often provided firearms and ammunition.

If we had more hunters like John, we wouldn't need special youth programs.

R. CHRISTMAN
PENN HILLS

**Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters,"
2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters
will be edited for brevity and clarity.**

Someone once wrote that remorse is “One of those terrible moments when the wheel of passion stands suddenly still.” He failed to report how long, how hurtful the feeling could be, and that the state was forever temporary, forever intermittent, but, too, a constant in a man’s life, specifically the hunting man . . .

Beyond the Dread Remorse

By Joe Parry

THERE IS a painfully obvious impulsive nature about the hunting man. At least I speak on behalf of myself and many acquaintances. And it seems our spouses are always more than willing to bring up our implusiveness.

My wife going on 30 years has forever referred to me as a “gun nut.” I once mistakenly asked her how she would describe herself, taking into consideration that she spent enough time in a local wall and floor covering shop to be justifiably — save for lack of wages — called an employee. Why, she changed the wallpaper in our dining room more times than I changed my socks last year.

“So what do you call yourself,” I asked one day, “a wall nut?”

I tried to understand her fixation, but she made little, if any, noticeable effort to understand or cope with mine. I gave up keeping track of how many times she retorted with phrases such as, “If you were to make veneer from all the walnut stocks on your guns we could panel the whole house and still have enough leftover to wholesale out to the local cabinet maker.” I never

cracked a smile. Humor was not her forte and dark humor seemed apparent when she once said, “Let’s remove all the barrels from your guns and make the kids a swing set and outdoor gym.” She was always in the tormenting, chastising and fun poking mode which, I suppose, is why I’ve owned so many guns yet harbored only one spouse.

For a couple of seasons, due to health problems and a change of heart regarding killing, I abandoned hunting as my second love in life. But, because the guns were still there, a constant reminder to her — as the house leaned a bit toward the corner where they stood — she’d reprimand me for not hunting, making use of said arsenal.

I hate cliches, but for lack of one more descriptive, I found myself living the proverbial “no win situation.” Besides, I wanted to hunt, missed it desperately and couldn’t bear seeing the hunters’ autumn gatherings in and around our little village without feeling deeply sorrowful, and once in a while having to pretend I didn’t hear when someone would whisper, “There’s Joe Parry, the great outdoor writer; he doesn’t even hunt anymore.” Little did they know that Joe was slowly coming back.

The Good Book, somewhere in James says, “The tongue no man can tame; it is



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an unruly evil." James obviously wasn't a hunter, so I'll add that neither can the hunter's heart be entirely tamed. For the ever elusive, primordial hunting urge lives in its deepest, most hidden chambers. But, too, it must be said that it should be universally known within the faction and otherwise, that is to those who choose not to hunt, a hunter's heart must never romance or entertain evil.

Certainly our hearts simmer steadily with the intentions to pursue and ultimately kill, but only for the benefit of wildlife. That, I believe, is what most hunters strive to enhance throughout their lives. And thus, I made the weekly rounds to the three village sporting goods shops, in an attempt to expose myself to the predatory chatter, the language of men with whom I could intimately relate.

One morning while in Wayne Smith's Triple D Gun Shop, I was fondling a dirty little side-by-side 12-bore when mischievous Wayne sneaked up behind me and yelled, "Hi, Joe." Jumping from my britches I stretched my camo suspenders to their limit. Wayne knows I'm nearly deaf and seems to like to take advantage of that for the sake of humor at my expense. He's always successful, and I enjoy it most times.

I walked the short distance around the gun rack like a gem dealer examining the crown jewels of Great Britain and finally, nonchalantly asked, "What's this filthy little smoothbore here, Wayne?" It was so dirty a person could have made a house planter out of it without adding potting soil, not to mention the cobwebs so thick that the Flying Wallenda's would be compelled into a little trampoline exercise.

"An Italian gun, an Excelsior. Nice one, ain't it?"

I mentioned that it might be, beneath the clinging spider webs and dust.

"How much if I don't make you spruce it up?" I asked. Hoping there might be some discount involved in this transaction.

"For you, Joe? How about \$300?"

We made the deal, and after returning home I removed all the grime and cobwebs, only to find a little price tag wedged between the double triggers. In Wayne's own hand it read \$295. Now take this not as him being smarter than I, just craftier, and I'm being nice.

After scrubbing the bore and gently pen-knifing off the gummy film so as not to scratch what might be beneath, it turned out to be a real beauty. "Gorgeous. Old Wayne blew it this time. Now, let's see if she'll pattern as pretty as she looks," I said to no one in particular.

I grabbed two No. 8s, two No. 7½s and two No. 6 shotshells, crossed the road and placed a piece of paper with a 3-inch bull on a wooden frame. In short, the old Italian patterned as good as she looked. I brought home the targets to show my son, Justin.

"Looks awfully good to me, Pop. Now all you have to do is quit making excuses, like your doggoned shotgun lost all sense of direction, when you miss an easy shot at a grouse."

He got his sense of humor from his mother and fine-tuned it to a humiliating science. I once told him, "Thank goodness you got my brains, son, my intellect."

"Why is that, Pop. Didn't you need them?"

He laughed, as usual, at my expense. If I were paid for all the fun poking and laughs obtained via my embarrassment, I wouldn't have to spend the wee hours of the night pecking away on my word processor to make a living (bare existence is more accurate).

Few things in the natural world excite me like ruffed grouse. There is just something mystifying about their appearance, and I never tire of watching them. Too, I suppose because they've won more "contests" than I have during my 40-some years

of hunting them, that they hold a special place in my heart.

Being a little rusty, I needed to do all I could to hone my shooting skills to a respectable edge. Clays were the order of the week prior to the grouse opener. After about 50 or 60 “pulls,” Justin did all he could to hold back the laughs, while I was ready to make a fancy fence post out of the Italian shotgun. “You’re hittin’ ’em, Pop, but with just little chips out of those clays, we might as well pick ’em up and use ’em again,” Justin said.

“Only takes a few BBs to kill a grouse, Son.” Then, feeling shamefully guilty, I added, “Yea, you’re right. What do you think I’m doing wrong?”

Justin has always been honest, but one can carry almost anything to the extreme. “What ya did wrong, Pop, is you took that shotgun from the cabinet and decided to hunt grouse. You’ve laid off too long, I’d say. You should have at least practiced a few times a year during the layoff. Shoot, I remember when you’d smoke clays with the old Fox.”

That evening, I was “shooting” imaginary clays in our living room, trying to smooth out the swing-through style I use on all game birds. Justin came down the stairs, stopped halfway and said, smiling, “That’s one way a guy can never miss, Pop.” He laughed and so did I. “Why don’t you give old Tim a call over at Cooper’s Sporting Goods in Mansfield? He’s a pretty good wingshot. Maybe he’ll have some idea as to how to improve your shooting.”

The next morning I gave Tim a call. “Tim, I’m in a bit of a jam, and because you shoot clays and hunt a lot, I figured maybe you could help.”

Tim told me to go

ahead, adding jokingly that I couldn’t hit a standing bull in the rump with a fistful of rice — just the inspiration I needed.

“Tell ya what, Joe. I have these new shells in from Polywad Incorporated out of Georgia called Spred-R shotshells. These shells produce a pattern two times larger than traditional shotshells, and they maintain real impressive density downrange. They’re tremendous. I haven’t missed a single bird since I discovered them.”

“Save me a couple boxes in 7½s, Timmy; I’ll be over.”

I didn’t dare tell Justin about the new shells, wanting to impress him with having regained my ability to knock down anything that flew within shotgun range, specifically a couple of grouse on opening day.

Opening day arrived with a dark sky and misty rain — good hunting weather. “Ready, Partner?” I asked Justin.

“Yep, how about you, Pop? Sure hope you don’t shoot up a box of shells just for two grouse.”

“Oh, I’m ready,



and don't you be worrying about old gunner here. I think I've figured out my problem and have a good feeling I'll be done early."

"What was the problem, Pop, bent barrels on that old Italian?"

I shook my head and mentioned that he'd soon see the real wingshooter in the Parry family in action.

In a small tangle of wild grapes near a spring seep, I spotted a single bird just as it ducked its head. The old Italian gun went automatically to my shoulder and I stomped my right foot. The grouse didn't flush but began to hotfoot it directly away from me. About that time I heard Justin's old Ruger Red Label roar, and I took my eyes off the running bird for an instant. Then, just as I looked back where I'd last seen it, the bird flushed and flew behind a tree. I sighed, thinking it might have been my only chance of the morning, and then began questioning my emotional ability to kill again. Knowing the hunter never re-

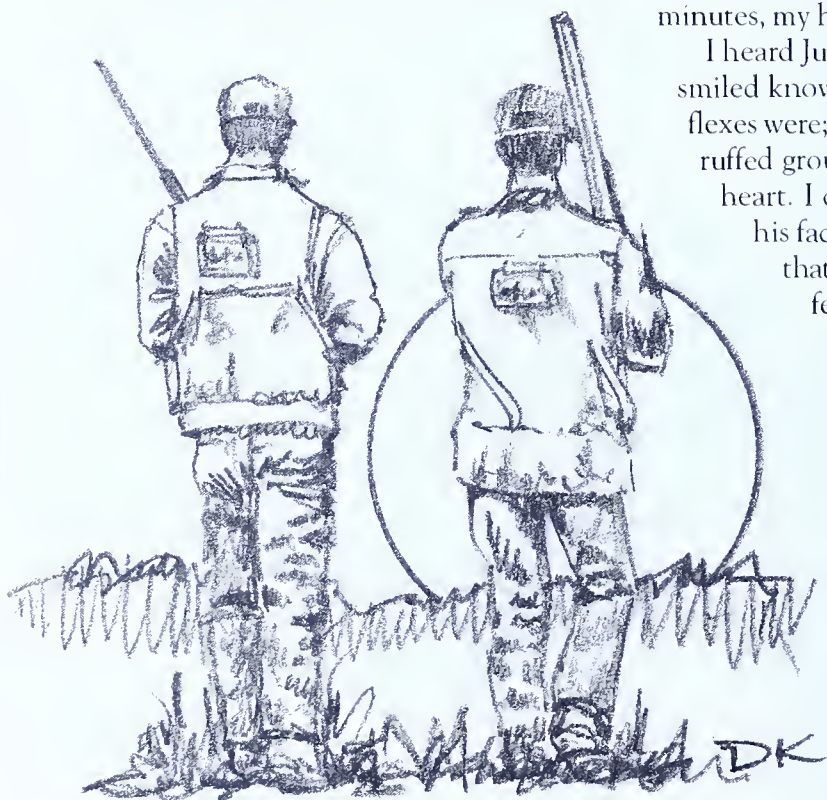
ally "quits" as long as he lives, knowing the natural need to hunt never completely dies out, and knowing the embers forever burn, I forced myself into giving those embers enough "air" to enflame.

I continued my quiet walk through the tangled, moist hollow in search of God's most enchanting bird. I couldn't have taken 25 steps when — from an opening, no less — a single bird flushed. The gun came smoothly to my shoulder, an unconscious urging of mind over matter, like the talons of a raptor extending outward the instant before a kill.

I don't recall hearing the gun go off, but I vividly recall the grouse stopping in mid-air as if it had hit a wall, then dropping to earth in what seemed like slow motion. I broke the gun, slid the spent hull into my pocket and replaced it with a fresh load. I stood there a moment, looking at the grouse, wondering how I was going to handle my first kill in two years. I took the first step toward it and another bird flushed, then another. The second grouse tumbled back to earth at my shot, and in less than five minutes, my hunting day was done.

I heard Justin shoot again, and I smiled knowing how sharp his reflexes were; knowing how dear the ruffed grouse was to his hunting heart. I could see the smile on his face, too, but I also knew that at that moment he was feeling the remorse common to all hunters after the killing of a game animal.

I sat there stroking and smoothing the feathers of the two birds, realizing that what I did was okay. Realizing that grouse are one game bird that will always be around in sub-



stantial numbers, knowing that hunting is the best tool for ensuring their future. And sometimes, it seems that I step outside of myself and see that I could never be happy without hunting in my life. And I question crazy things, such as how a gram of gold can be worth more than a butterfly of the same weight. Certainly, I've learned lessons in my many years as a hunter, lessons that ultimately enhanced wild places and things in maybe just a small way. The killing of the two grouse was okay in my heart. I was comfortable with it. I was back, and this time knew I'd stay until my weakened heart dictated otherwise. I need wildness, hate cities and civilization; the woods, for me, harbor far more "roses" than "thorns."

Justin came walking up the hill where I sat, two birds tethered to his belt. His face was the color of oak leaves bleached by a relentless autumn sun. He spotted the grouse on my lap. "Well, two birds, huh, Pop? How do ya feel about it after bein' gone so long?"

"See you did okay, too, huh? How do I feel? About killin' again?" I looked into his eyes, smiled and said, "I'd say I feel most comfortable, like I'm in tune with everything that happens out here. How about you?"

Justin's heart has always been borderline with regard to handling a hunting kill. But he loved grouse hunting and, I think, forced himself into some sort of emotional numbness. He answered, "Same as it was on our first hunt, Pop, grateful as I can be. Nothing like a brace of ruffs marinated in wine sauce."

I smiled with a renewed pride. Pride that was always abundant, but missing in the two years I didn't hunt. Feeling that special pride in him once again brought my heart full circle and made the day complete.

We sat there a while, talking about how we each took our limit of grouse. I told him about the Polywad shells, and how I felt I cheated a little because they threw such a great pattern. He replied by mentioning that an old guy like me should take all the ad-

vantage he could in life, then he laughed that million-dollar laugh of his I cherish so much. He loves to laugh and is forever teasing me or making up absurd jokes.

"Pop, do ya know that country singer, Shania Twain?"

"Don't know her," I said sarcastically, "but, yes, I know who ya mean? Why?"

"Know what her real name is?"

"No."

"Her real name is Choo-Choo." He laughed again and added, "Choo-Choo Twain. Get it, Choo-Choo Twain."

"Yes, I get it, and I suppose you're gonna tell me that she has a brother named Lionel."

We laughed together, and during those priceless moments I realized more than ever before just why I loved to hunt. What happened to me after having gone through four heart attacks, that is never wanting to kill again, was perhaps God's way of allowing my heart to heal. For surely He knew I'd push myself in the autumn woods before the ticker was ready. But for whatever reason, I'm back to where I want to be. And once a man becomes intimate with nature and falls hopelessly in love with the whole package, he naturally understands it to a broader extent.

The remorse that accompanies the killing of an animal is forever present but buffered with certain knowledge that death plays a vital role with regard to wildlife and our natural world. I did not "need" those two grouse I killed; let's call them the destination. It was the journey I needed toward that end. And I find it rather difficult, if not impossible, to walk the woodlands without the heft of a gun. On second thought, a lemon and buff Brit-tany would be nice to have along, too. □

AP Canada Geese Banding Studies

By Kevin Jacobs
PGC Wildlife Biologist

GOOSE HUNTERS will have more opportunities this year, especially in eastern Pennsylvania, an area affected by hunting regulations tied to the migratory Atlantic Population (AP) Canada geese that breed in northern Quebec (Figure 1). As many waterfowlers remember, due to an alarming decline in AP geese from 1988 to 1995, fall and winter goose hunting in much of eastern Pennsylvania was closed from 1995 to 1999, to protect these migrant geese (see November 1999 *Game News*). Since 1996, geese in northern Quebec have rebounded to a level that supported limited AP goose hunting opportunities during the 1999-00 and 2000-01 seasons. This year AP goose hunting opportunities have been expanded with more days to hunt and a daily bag that increased from one to two birds. (Check the latest waterfowl hunting regulations in the "News" section.)

While hunting opportunities have increased, waterfowl managers have been carefully monitoring AP geese. The Game Commission has been an important partner in these studies, not only through funding, but also by assisting with breeding ground studies. Additional partners in Pennsylvania have included the Susquehanna River Waterfowlers and the Blue Mountain

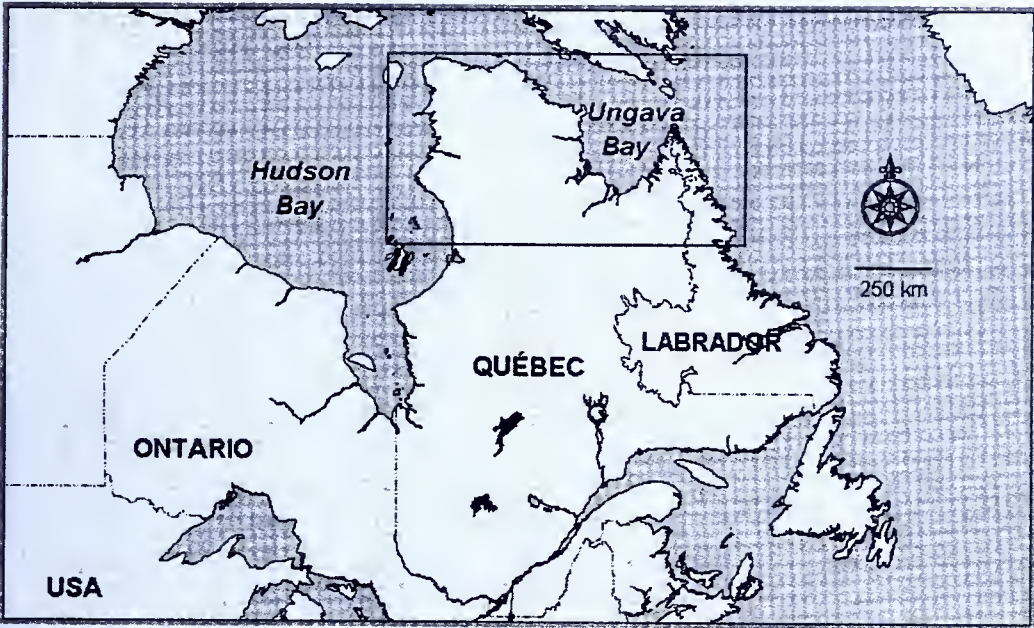


KEVIN JACOBS with two banded Canadas. The main objective is to create a population of marked geese from representative portions of the AP breeding range.

Chapter of Safari Club International. Since 1998, I've been participating in AP Canada goose preseason leg banding operations in northern Quebec. This article is a summary of what we've learned from these leg-banding efforts.

The main objective is to create a population of marked geese from representative portions of the AP breeding range. From these marked — banded — geese, we can monitor adult and juvenile survival rates, hunter harvest rate, timing and distribution of harvest, and population delineation. Other benefits of capturing large numbers of breeding geese are to obtain pre-fledging immature:adult age ratios, breeding ground recaptures of previously banded birds, and body size measurements, which

Figure 1. Location of breeding grounds pre-season leg-banding program on Atlantic Population Canada geese in the Ungava Peninsula, Quebec (figure provided by R.J. Hughes, Canadian Wildlife Service).



may be useful in population delineation. The present program of breeding ground banding, which includes both the western (Hudson Bay) and eastern (Ungava Bay) portions of the northern Quebec breeding range, began in 1997.

From 1997 to 2000, groups of molting, flightless geese were captured over a 2-week period in late July and early August in two areas of the Ungava Peninsula in northern Quebec, one along the northern Hudson Bay coast near Povungnituk, and the other near Kuujuaq, in southern Ungava Bay.

The Ungava Peninsula and the northern Hudson Bay coast represent the western and eastern breeding range of AP Canada geese. Helicopters were used to round up and drive the geese toward a funnel-shaped trap. Only flocks containing goslings were captured, and based on nesting dates, most of the goslings banded were about five or six weeks old. All geese were banded with USFWS toll-free leg bands.

From 1997 to 2000, 21,106 geese were banded (Table 1). Results from our 2001

efforts were record breaking, with nearly 8,000 geese banded. Nesting efforts and gosling production in 2001 are considered excellent and should result in a fall flight of geese near levels experienced in the mid-1980s.

Goose distribution was quite different at the two locations. Along Hudson Bay, brood-rearing geese were scattered across the tundra in small flocks containing family groups of three to six geese. Along Ungava Bay, most of the geese had assembled in large flocks in a few coastal salt marshes. Banding drives along Hudson Bay often combined two or more separate brood flocks in order to increase catch sizes. Despite these attempts, catch sizes have averaged 42 geese over the 4-year period. At Ungava Bay, catch sizes were larger, averaging 74 during the four years.

Due to the differences in goose distribution between the areas, two banding crews worked along Hudson Bay

Table 1. Results from Canada goose pre-season leg-banding operation in northern Quebec from 1997 to 2000 (data provided by R.J. Hughes, Canadian Wildlife Service).

PARAMETER	HUDSON BAY				UNGAVA BAY				TOTAL
	1997	1998	1999	2000	1997	1998	1999	2000	4 Years
Year									
No. Banding Crews	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	3
Total Geese Banded	1,161	3,821	5,333	2,616	2,000	2,007	2,239	1,929	21,106
Adults Banded	335	1,360	2,017	1,291	916	675	1,045	1,033	8,672
Juveniles Banded	806	2,461	3,316	1,325	1,084	1,332	1,194	896	12,414
Juveniles Per Adult	2.4	1.81	1.64	1.03	1.18	1.97	1.14	.87	1.43
Recaptures	5	67	149	102	44	84	189	67	707

from 1998-2000, to boost the number of banded geese in this important breeding area. Although greater effort is required to band geese in the Hudson Bay area compared to Ungava Bay, the Hudson Bay area generally accounts for a substantially greater part of the total breeding population.

The number of juveniles per adult provides a crude index to annual production of young. This index ranged from 0.87 for Ungava Bay in 2000 (a poor production year) to 2.4 for Hudson Bay in 1997 (an excellent production year) and averaged 1.43 for the two areas for all years combined. The index was higher in the Hudson Bay area than Ungava Bay. It's felt that gosling production was above average in 1997-1999, but below average in 2000, due to a late spring and snowstorms during the peak nesting period.

There have been 707 recaptures of banded geese at both areas. Nearly all recaptured geese had been banded either near the same locations where they were recaptured or were banded on wintering grounds in Maryland, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. (Interestingly, a few "Pennsylvania" resident geese were recaptured during the summer in Georgia, New Jersey, Ohio, southern Ontario and

South Carolina. Most of these birds had been banded as juveniles, indicating they are likely molt migrants.)

To date, of the 21,106 geese banded, 432 (two percent) have been reported by hunters. This low recovery rate is due to the restrictive hunting seasons that have been in place since 1999. The number of recoveries has been essentially equal between Canada (207) and the United States (203). Since 1997, there have been 33 recoveries of AP geese in Pennsylvania, most in southeastern Pennsylvania.

The low harvest rate of AP Canada geese has promoted the rapid recovery of this population. Now that AP geese have returned to healthy numbers, hunting seasons can be expanded. It is important to note that any additional hunting opportunities will also help control resident goose numbers, especially in the southeast portion of the state.

This banding program, and the nesting and population surveys, provide managers the information needed to closely monitor AP Canada geese. This information was not available when the population declined in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Today, however, with continued support of research efforts, we can responsibly expand goose hunting opportunities directly related to what the AP of Canada geese can support on an annual basis. □

A Change of Heart

By Robert Brummett



I HAVE ALWAYS been a gun man. The idea of sticking a deer with a "sharp stick" and letting it bleed to death did not appeal to me at all. Shock, I thought, was the way to go. Hit them well and hard and it's all over. But then I took my first deer with one of those sharp sticks, and everything changed.

My wife is the archer in the family. She had participated in target archery as a child, and when she recently reinvigorated her interest in the sport she tried to enlist me as well. I resisted at first. It simply didn't appeal to me, but the

opportunity for more time afield, and at such a lovely time of year, persuaded me. We would be hunting together, which is important to us, so I decided to take the plunge.

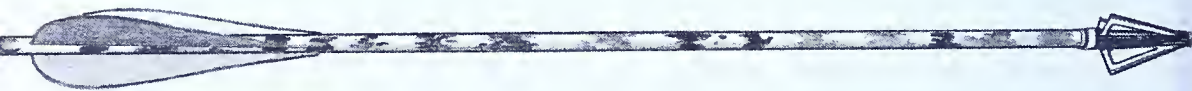
The first obstacle was a shoulder injury that prevents me from pulling even the lightest compound bow. Fortunately, Pennsylvania has provisions for allowing hunters with disabilities to enjoy bowhunting. A trip to my orthopedist provided me with the documentation the Game Commission requires to issue a permit

allowing me to hunt with a crossbow.

Crossbows seemed to be ugly, unwieldy things, nothing at all like a fine rifle, so I decided to go for simplicity, durability and accuracy, and bought a recurve crossbow rather than a compound. My skepticism about the ungainly looking thing turned to admiration, however, when I began to shoot it. I quickly learned that it was not smart to shoot more than one bolt at a single target. At 20 yards the bow is capable of stacking them on top of each other, and that can get expensive in a hurry. I

minutes they drifted off into the cover surrounding the clearing and were gone. On my way back to the truck I realized that my failure to shoot came from my reluctance to launch that "sharp stick" at the deer. I just wasn't ready.

The next afternoon I was back at my stand, crouching once again behind the rock. To my left a little stream disappeared into a dense jungle of multiflora rose and low brush. I knew there was a deer trail along the stream that ran into that brush, but my attention was riveted on the clearing where the deer had appeared the day before.



discovered that when its limitations of range and trajectory are respected, the crossbow is a formidable tool in the accuracy department. But shooting it at a live target turned out to be another matter entirely.

My first opportunity for a shot came early in the season. I had an excellent ground stand with a big rock in front of me and low brush all around. There was still a good half hour of hunting time remaining when a deer emerged from a stand of trees in front of me. A big doe and her fawn — a button buck — began browsing in a small clearing 18 yards away. I waited until they were both looking away from me and then eased the crossbow into alignment.

The big doe never presented a good angle, but the smaller deer seemed to be posing for me. Something about the situation didn't feel right, however, so I didn't shoot. I had plenty of time, the sight picture looked good, but I just couldn't pull the trigger. I just didn't feel confident of a clean kill. After a few more

I had been on stand for about a half hour when I turned my head and noticed that a deer was standing on the far bank of the narrow stream, barely clear of the thicket, its head down as it drank. I was in a bad position, facing away from the deer and with my crossbow pointed at the clearing. I resisted the temptation to try to move the bow into a better position. In a few moments the deer raised its head and looked directly at me.

We were only about 20 yards apart, and in my imagination I could already hear the snort and see the flash of tail as it vaulted back into the thicket. But it simply stared for a few more minutes and then turned and ambled in my direction along the stream. I knew immediately that it was the button buck from the afternoon before.

The deer moved slowly, pausing to lower its head and browse as it came closer. When its head was lowered, I changed position so that I was now facing left, looking over the low brush surrounding my stand.

Directly in front of me was the trail that curved up away from the stream and

went toward the clearing, now on my right. Straight out in front was a clear spot between two large trees, and the deer was heading along the trail for that spot. When it paused behind the first tree, I raised the crossbow and put the sight on the open spot between the trees. It came out from behind the first tree and stopped again in the opening, presenting a clear shot. I put the sight directly behind its shoulder, dropped the sight just a bit because of the distance, released the safety and pressed the trigger.

The sound of the string-slap seemed as sharp as a rifle shot. I didn't see the bolt go, but I could clearly make out a sudden ruffling of the hair and the last of the fletching as it passed through the deer exactly where I had aimed. The deer jumped and ran, but after a few steps it slowed and then walked into the clearing as if nothing had happened. After a moment, however, the deer began to wobble then rolled onto its side.

I looked at my watch, and then watched through binoculars. The deer's final breath came less than two minutes after it had reached the clearing. There had been no struggle, no flopping around and no sign of any distress. I paced the distance from where I had shot to where the deer had been standing and determined that it was only 11 yards.

My wife had been on stand about 150

Crossbows with a draw weight of at least 125 pounds, but not more than 200 pounds may be used during the regular firearms deer seasons in **Special Regulations Area** (Allegheny, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia) counties.

yards downwind and had heard the shot. By the time hunting hours were over and she had worked her way over to my stand, I had finished field-dressing the deer. In the growing darkness we dragged it out to the truck and drove home. It was warm that day, so we decided to butcher the deer ourselves and get it into the freezer.

So, what did I learn on that beautiful autumn afternoon? For one thing I had learned that the bow — any bow — is a formidable hunting implement. I have taken deer with rifles, shotguns and muzzleloaders, and this was among the cleanest and possibly most humane kills I had ever made.

I also reinforced something that I already knew: That passing up a shot is never really a cause for regret. Genuine regret comes from hasty decisions and poor judgment that results in game not recovered. The old truths of the woods just seem to get better and stronger with the passage of time. □

COVER PAINTING BY GERALD PUTT

THE GAME COMMISSION is pleased to offer "Return of the Monarch" featured on this month's cover. The 6x6 bull is definitely king of that particular hill in elk country. Limited to 950 signed and numbered prints, image is about 18x24 inches; prints are \$125, plus \$10.95 s&h. Framed prints cost an additional \$97.50, plus \$14.95 s&h. PA residents must add 6 percent sales tax. Make checks payable to the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Order from the PA Game Commission, Dept. MS, 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Check out "The Outdoor Shop" on our web site at www.pgc.state.pa.us for other items featuring Pennsylvania's elk.

Wrong Place, Right Time

By Mario L. Piccirilli

Butler County WCO

"MARIO, the region office wants you to call them as soon as possible," Deputy Harold Kennedy said. Harold and I had been investigating the illegal killing of two deer in Adams Township, and I was interviewing a suspect at the time the office called me. It was around 4 p.m. on Saturday, December 9, 2000, the last day of buck season and the first day of doe. It had been a busy day. Nine deputies and I had been constantly on the go, from 30 deer being pushed out of a field onto Route 8, causing traffic congestion, to hunters driving through unharvested fields. We also investigated many safety zone violations.

After interviewing the suspect, I called the region office. The dispatcher informed me that someone had called to report an untagged deer hanging in a trailer in Winfield Township. I called deputies Francis Bodema and Scott Klopfer to check it out while Harold and I finished our investigation. Francis said that he and deputies Paul Shaffer, Doug Paulsen and Klopfer had just apprehended two individuals for putting Allegheny County doe tags on three deer they had shot in Butler County. They would be tied up for about an hour. I asked Harold to call deputies Jeff Crane, Skip Wagle and Dan Eshenbaugh to take care of the untagged deer.

An hour later Jeff called me and said they had trouble finding the

trailer, but that they had six illegal deer and for me to get down there as soon as possible.

Harold and I met Deputy Wagle, who was waiting for us on Jersey Road. "You're going to have to put it in four wheel drive, because once off the main drag the road is really icy and treacherous," he said. I soon saw what he meant. The road was steep with sharp bends and covered with ice, as the temperature hovered around 12 degrees.

Finally, turning a bend I saw deputies Crane and Eshenbaugh standing beside their vehicle. Off to their left was a large barn with three deer hanging in the front opening — two does and a big 8-point. In the back of a pickup there were two more does. A deer, cut into four quarters, lay on the ground in front of the barn. Mr. and Mrs. Stover were standing by the truck, and three other men and one juvenile were standing off to the side near the barn.

Jeff told me they had six untagged deer, and only one of the hunters had a license. I spoke to the man and woman who allegedly shot four of the deer. I asked Mr. Stover if he could explain to me why four untagged deer were in his possession. He looked at his wife and then down at the ground, and then blurted out, "I shot a 5-point buck in archery season, but the processor wanted \$70 to process it. I didn't have the money, because I'm laid off from work, so I shot these four does today."

"Do you have any doe licenses," I said.

"No, I don't."

I informed him that even with a regular antlerless license and a private landowner antlerless license, he was still two deer over the limit. He glanced at his wife. Mrs. Stover looked at me and blurted out, "I went hunting but didn't shoot any deer."

I then spoke to a Mr. Hughes, who allegedly shot the buck. I asked him if he shot it. "Ya, I did," he said.

"Why isn't the deer tagged?"

"The tag is still in my license."

"Why didn't you fill it out and attach it

to the buck?"

"Because I went back out to kill another buck," Mr. Hughes said.

I then spoke to Mr. Simons who allegedly shot the large doe hanging in the barn. He said he didn't have a doe license either, but didn't think it was a problem because he was hunting on private property. I told him that it was a problem, that he did need a license.

Mr. Brant, who did not shoot any deer but assisted the others in hunt-



Deputies Bodema, Klopfer, Shaffer and Paulsen were instrumental in the investigation and prosecution of two individuals for tagging Butler County deer with Allegheny County tags. Fines and costs for both totaled more than \$2,000, plus revocations of their hunting privileges. At the end of our day, which was near midnight, we had issued 12 citations for fines exceeding \$5,500 and confiscated 10 deer, which we gave to needy families.

\$2,000 in fines and costs. Mr. Hughes, Mr. Brant and Mr. Simons each had fines and costs totaling \$550. The defendants all pled guilty and made time payments, and lost their hunting privileges.

Later, I asked my deputies about the trailer with the untagged deer.

ing, field-dressing, skinning and butchering them, was charged with aid and abetting.

While I was photographing the deer before taking them, Mr. Hughes asked if I could take his picture with the buck, because it was his first. "By all means," I said, and I took photos of him with the buck.

I explained to all the defendants that they would be receiving citations for shooting deer without valid licenses.

I approached the 14-year-old youngster who was with the group and spoke to him and his stepfather. I asked him if he realized what was going on, and he nodded sadly that he did. I told him that hunting is not supposed to be this way, and that it was unfortunate he had to witness this activity. He told officer Crane that when the other members of the group started shooting the deer, he asked his stepfather to leave, because he wanted no part in it. Unfortunately, his stepfather was the one cited for aiding and abetting the other members of the group. I could see the disappointment in the boy's face as his stepfather repeatedly apologized for his behavior.

"I remember you from hunter-ed class and how you told us to be sportsmen in the field," the boy said.

"You're the one and only real sportsman in this group, and I'm proud of you," I said.

Citations for Mr. Stover exceeded

"Once we turned down the icy road we knew we had missed the trailer and went



on down to turn around," Jeff said. "When we got to the bottom of the hill, we saw all the deer hanging and introduced ourselves and asked if we could check them. Once we started checking, we realized that none of the deer were tagged, and that's when we called you. I guess being in the wrong place at the right time does pay off sometimes." □

Wildlife Passages and Highways

By Kevin Mixon

Wildlife Biologist



Bill Ruediger

PARKS CANADA and transportation officials joined forces to build this wildlife overpass in Banff National Park in Alberta.

PENNSYLVANIA has a vast network of approximately 160,000 miles of roads that crisscross the state. Many of the roads travel through wetlands, streams, forests and old field habitat that is home to amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Wildlife plus roads equals roadkill. Everyone who has ever driven in the state of Pennsylvania has seen roadkilled wildlife.

More than 45,000 white-tailed deer are reported killed on highways every year in Pennsylvania, and the actual number is no doubt greater. Approximately 340 bears and 60 or more bobcats were also killed on Pennsylvania roads during 1999. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, millions of vertebrates (birds, reptiles, mammals and amphibians) are killed every year on America's roads. The driving public is also at risk. Surveys indicate that

more than 20,000 Americans are injured and more than 100 people die each year as a result of wildlife related auto accidents. In addition, the Insurance Information Institute estimates the average vehicle repair cost for a deer/vehicle collision is \$2,000.

Roads also fragment wildlife habitat into smaller more isolated patches. The smaller patches may not contain everything a species needs to survive. Some species

need large intact patches to survive and reproduce. Thus, the isolated areas will support fewer species. The smaller patches have fewer stable populations because disease, adverse weather and predators can eliminate some species from small areas. Because smaller areas are not connected to similar habitat, it's harder for the area to be repopulated. The result is unstable populations with high mortality.

Wildlife passages can help reduce roadkilled wildlife, improve road safety and connect habitat patches. Wildlife passages are structures (culverts, bridges and overpasses) that allow wildlife to move under or above the road to get from one side to the other.

Wildlife passages have been used



A.D. Marble & Company

A CAMERA strategically placed inside a wildlife passage and that is triggered by a motion sensor will reveal what critters are using the structure.

successfully for salamanders in Massachusetts, bears and panthers in Florida, desert tortoises in California, mountain goats in Montana, badgers in the Netherlands, and various other species at many more locations around the world.

The results can be dramatic as demonstrated by work done on the Trans Canada Highway that runs through Banff National Park in Alberta, Canada. Parks Canada and transportation officials installed 22 underpasses, two overpasses, and extensive fencing on both sides of a 28-mile section of road that was being widened. The number of roadkilled ungulates (elk, deer and moose) was reduced by 96 percent.

Endangered and threatened species can be eliminated from areas due to habitat fragmentation and increased mortality. New roads that fragment endangered and threatened species' habitat need wildlife passages to link habitat patches together and reduce mortality.

Pennsylvania has addressed wildlife movement near highways by using oversized culverts and bridges in conjunction with streams or wetlands.

Streams and wetland habitat act as natural travel corridors and are logical places for wildlife to travel. The oversized structures provide dry upland areas adjacent to the stream or wetland that enables wildlife to move under the road.

Culverts and bridges specifically designed for wildlife corridors will be constructed in Pennsylvania in the future. The structures may or may not be associated with streams or wetlands, and will be located in areas with large expanses of intact habitat to act as corridors for wildlife movement.

Fencing is used to funnel wildlife to the openings and increase the use of the artificial crossings. Planting trees and shrubs that provide food and cover can enhance travel corridors that lead to structures. Small rodents can be encouraged to use structures by providing logs and rock piles for them to sneak through to get to the other side without being exposed to predators along the way.

Use of wildlife passages by mammals can be determined by monitoring the structures. Track beds, consisting of a fine material such as sand or sifted dirt, can be located in the structure, and the tracks will identify what species are using the passage. Camera's that are triggered by motion can also be installed to photograph the animals moving through the structure.

Wildlife passages enable wildlife to safely move from one side of the road to the other to meet all of their survival needs and to disperse to new habitats. Dispersing individuals helps with the genetics of a species and ultimately makes for healthy and diverse wildlife populations.

Wildlife passages have been proven to reduce the number of animals killed on roads, improve safety, and connect habitat. As Pennsylvanians, we need to act responsibly by providing wildlife passages to protect and preserve wildlife for future generations. □

First Fox



LAST WINTER was more exciting than any I've experienced before, because I discovered an awesome new pastime: trapping, and I'd like to share with you how I got started and some of the experiences I've enjoyed while pursuing this activity in northern Pennsylvania's picturesque mountains.

In the spring leading up to the season, my dad and I attended a trapper training course conducted by the Game Commis-

sion. At first I wasn't sure I wanted to go. I was a devoted hunter and target shooter who could have cared less about other outdoor pursuits. Finally my dad talked me into it, and now I'm glad he did. When we stepped into the building I was captivated.

The traps fascinated me, as did the several local trappers there who shared information about traps, sets and furbearers. I knew nothing about trapping, but I definitely wanted to learn, and by the end of the first session I was seriously considering making a few muskrat sets in our pond.

The course ran for several nights and one Saturday. During the Saturday session we went outside and got some actual field experience picking locations and making sets. Getting the chance to put a trap in the ground hooked me. I was going to trap. I got a stack of old *Trapper and Predator Caller* magazines from one of the trappers and read them cover to cover.

Later on in the summer my dad and I attended the state trapping

By Jeremy Castle

convention in Hughsville. It was incredible, as hundreds of men and women who loved trapping were there. A lot of trapping supply companies had displays, and people were selling used traps and equipment. I also saw some interesting demonstrations featuring distinguished trappers such as Russ Carman, Pete and Ron Leggett and Andy Stoe. I found excellent deals on things I needed, and I acquired information that would prove essential when trapping season came.

On the opening day of trapping season I set about a dozen traps. I made all dirt hole sets for fox (I didn't know how to make any others), and I made a couple of different coon sets, mainly hollow tree cubbies. The next day I found every trap untouched, which really didn't surprise me. It did surprise me, however, when I made my second check and one of my traps held a large red fox. One of my dirt holes had actually paid off. The #2 Victor had a solid hold on the front foot of the fox.

As soon as I dispatched my catch and finished checking my other sets (all empty), I called Charlie Fox and Ron Gleckner, two men who had instructed and guided me, and excitedly told them about my catch. Charlie met me after school and showed me how to skin it. That afternoon he taught me skills that

will benefit me for as long as I run a trapline.

Over the course of the season I caught two raccoons and a gray fox. Other trappers had told me that a gray fox is more aggressive than a red, and the one I caught proved they were right. The red was relatively docile and calm, but the gray lunged, jumped, snarled and bit the muzzle of my rifle. I was glad to have a sturdy trap on its foot.

In addition to the fur I caught, I gained valuable information. Some of the things were just simple tips that make trapping much easier, such as using a metal stake to dig a dirt hole instead of a trowel. Others were major concepts that will dictate how I will trap in the future. I learned skills such as how to identify fox corridors and how to skin the animals I catch.

If I needed traps, Ron and Charlie were quick to loan me theirs. When I had questions, they took the time to answer them and teach me. These men are excellent woodsmen and great friends, and I hope to enjoy their company for many seasons. Thanks, fellows.

What does this season hold? Well, I really want to catch some muskrats, raccoons, maybe a few mink, and possibly a beaver. I scouted ponds, creeks and swamps, and obtained more traps, equipment and lure. I've also located good spots to try for coyotes. Regardless of my catch, however, I know I'll have a great time on my trapline. □

"Habitatman" Tour

By Mark Hogan

SURFING the Internet I noticed a message board on which members of a hunting organization were saying that the vegetation inside the deer exclosures Gary Alt uses to educate hunters about excessive deer populations was doctored with lime and fertilizer to make it appear more lush than it would be in a natural state.

This particular group has been criticizing Alt's recommendations to reduce the deer herd, and pointed to other factors, specifically acid rain, for the lack of browse outside the exclosures. The area inside the fencing, the group claims, has flourished because it had been heavily treated with lime to counter the acid rain effects.

The Internet thread was discussing these accusations when a fellow who went by "Habitatman" became active on the message board. Habitatman turned out to be John Dzemyan, Game Commission land management officer for Elk and McKean counties. It turns out that not only does he manage some of the exclosures on the game lands, he even erected some of the fences. The "horse's mouth," so to speak,

had dropped by to "visit" the message board. He said they were his fenced exclosures and no fertilizer or lime, or any type of soil additive, had been used in any of the exclosures that Dr. Alt uses to illustrate the impact of deer on habitat.

He went on to say that he gave tours of these fenced areas during and after the fences were installed. Habitatman said he was willing to share his knowledge about deer habitat management with anyone who cared to listen and learn.

Well, in this case, "anyone" turned out to be our group, the group of sportsmen on the web site. We just needed a shove to get us going in the right direction. I wanted to learn all I could about deer management. I had listened to Dr. Alt before and leaned towards trusting him, but I wanted to make sure I knew all I could on the subject.

Not wanting to let such an opportunity pass, I picked a date that I thought would suit everyone and posted it, along with the reason for the tour, on four message boards to see if there was any interest. Several people said they would like to attend, and I then sent Habitatman an e-mail with the plans. He was enthusiastic and

Larissa Rose



LMO JOHN DZEMYAN'S tours are extremely educational, and his knowledge about deer management and habitat issues quickly becomes evident.



Larissa Rose

THE DIFFERENCE between the insides and outsides of the exclosures revealed the truth: The deer were eating themselves out of good habitat.

confirmed the date. More messages kept the interested parties updated. We agreed that it would be a good time to meet each other and put faces with the message board nomenclatures. "Grundsow," "Shooter" and "Old Guy" confirmed early on that they would be there. To learn even more about deer and deer hunting, we agreed to have a picnic after the 5-hour tour, so we could exchange information.

Our tour began at a game lands food and cover building at 1 p.m., where 31 of us got to know each other a little before we drove off for our first stop, an area that had been logged in 1990. LMO John Dzemyan and WCO Richard Bodenhorn were our tour guides, and their knowledge about deer management and habitat issues was evident right from the beginning.

I had brought a friend who was extremely upset with the Game Commission's plans "to remove all deer from Pennsylvania," and we had discussed some of the tough questions he would ask. He has hunted Potter County for more than 30 years and had seen a tremendous decrease in deer numbers where he hunts. He blamed

the lack of deer in Potter County on the "bonus" antlerless tags that had been allowed over the years. Both PGC officers were clearly up to the challenge of answering my friend's difficult questions, and his tone quickly turned to one of respect when he was shown the evidence they had accumulated and their explanations of what they had observed.

It was also evident that the two officers shared our passion for deer and deer hunting. They explained that in 1993, due to budget restraints, they had sought outside funding to erect deer proof fencing in this area. Prior to the fencing, for three years right after clear-cutting had taken place on the site, no new growth of any desirable species of plant life had occurred. Several theories were presented, but John suspected it was the deer that were eating the plants before they could become established.

After the first fence was erected, the results were amazing. Desirable plants were flourishing. More fences were erected and, just as in the first case, the difference between the insides and outsides of the fenced areas revealed the truth: The deer were eating themselves out of good habitat.

Dzemyan and Bodenhorn showed us the plants inside the fence and why the deer needed them to survive and flourish. We found similar plants outside, but none had reached more than a few inches in height. They were being cropped to the ground as soon as deer found them.

Deer require five pounds of browse per day, and this area had many more deer than it could support and still contain self-sustaining preferred browse. It's mandatory that the deer population be reduced to the point where browse can grow, and then deer can exist as nature intended.

It was explained that there is much more to deer dynamics than just the current deer population. In one study, of the 24 roadkilled does they had examined, 37 percent didn't have any embryos, 42 percent had a single embryo, and only 21 percent had twins. None of the 1-year-old does

were found to have embryos in them. This low recruitment rate is another indication that there are too many deer, resulting in poor nutrition. Both officers also noted that deer in the area obtain their winter coats later than they should, and that they abort embryos, which further reduces the deer population.

We also need to remember how habitat created by reducing deer numbers helps all wildlife. Grouse and snowshoe hares are species that benefit from the regeneration in the area we toured. It's also easy to imagine how lush new growth provides better cover for fawn and buck survival.

Dzemyan and Bodenhorn took us to another area that had been selectively cut several years before and had fencing put up in the woods. The area inside the fence was thick with trillium, young oak and maple trees and many other species. Outside the fences, these plant species were absent.

At the next stop we looked at a food plot that had been limed with paper mill waste. Here, winter wheat

To see PGC land management practices yourself, check out the SGL tour schedule on page 43.

was planted in a field littered with rocks, where it's impractical to plant grass and clover. The acidity of the soil is such that, while native plants can flourish, if deer allow them to grow, it is too high to grow wheat, clover and other foods that can nourish deer and give the browse species a chance to grow.

The tour concluded back at the food and cover building, with a barbeque hosted by the Elk County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. A special thanks goes to the club and PFSC president Ted Onufrak for their efforts.

This tour was well worth the effort and we were grateful to these men, and the Game Commission, for the work they do. If you have an opportunity to attend one of these tours, make every effort to do so. My unbelieving friend is now convinced that more does need to be harvested in the northcentral counties, and the herd brought into balance with the carrying capacity of the land. □



MEMBERS of Buck Hollow Camp at North Bend in Clinton County in 1955. Notice that some of the hunters are wearing the traditional black and red Woolrich outfits so common in that era.

Jubilee is a biblical word referring to a celebration of a 50th anniversary.

The Jubilee Bear

By Ron Berrus

IT'S TWO HOURS before sunrise on the opening day of the 1999 bear season. While blackness surrounds the Gates's cabin, the yellow glow spilling out of the windows is a silent suggestion of the hustle and bustle going on inside. The 25-man roster is completed and rechecked, as have the plans for the day's three drives. Sam Gates, Larry, Troy, Lance, Junior, Bitner, Joe, Tom and all the others review the details of the first drive, which begins at dawn.

This is the way it's been on every opening day for the last 17 years. While mountains in Clinton and Clearfield counties will be driven before the season ends, Centre County remains the group's traditional favorite.

The Gates hunting tradition is deeply rooted in past generations. On the wall of the cabin is an old photograph from 1938 featuring Sam's grandfather and an earlier crew with a huge bear.



In more recent years, the Gates camp has to be one of Pennsylvania's most successful bear hunting camps. When the sun set on the third day of the 1999 season, six bears were hanging from the meat pole. More significantly, the final bear was the "Jubilee Bear," the 50th black bear taken since this generation of camp members began hunting bears in 1983. Thirty-five different hunters have taken those 50 bears, and the key ingredients in the camp's success include gun safety, dedication, discipline, cooperation, experience, and a desire to see others succeed.

To be so consistently successful is no easy task. Some prime black bear hunting states allow hunting over bait or with dogs. While these techniques can be appropriate in other states, and provide exciting hunts, bear hunting in Pennsylvania usually means sitting and hoping or, the alternative, driving productive areas with a sizeable crew. Many of the Gates Camp drives extend for two miles and last three or more hours. An unselfish leader, Sam Gates, is the "general," having the respect and appreciation of the entire crew. "Success depends upon the commitment of everyone to get the job done," Sam explains. "If you're driving, it means going through the thickest and roughest terrain. If you're watching, it means making sure you're diligently scanning the area, looking for that coal black patch of hair that signifies a bear on the move."

The roster of 25 hunters is divided into

THE GATES CAMP has averaged three bears per year, but in 1994 the group took 10.

two groups: drivers and watchers. Both groups must know each other's location and where they're going. Safety is the main concern and is stressed constantly throughout the season. Sam's safety lecture is seriously delivered each year as the crew prepares to leave camp, including a prayer for everyone's safety.

The first time I signed the Gates roster was in 1990. For the first drive on opening morning I was told to walk west down a hollow for 15 minutes, turn south, cross the creek, and climb up through the laurel until I could see the top of the mountain. After a nearly vertical climb for an hour, I located a leaning oak for my perch. I waited for daylight as the bitter cold numbed my feet. Two hours later all thoughts about being cold melted away when something big came crashing through the laurel.

Spotting a bear through a small opening, I swung my rifle to the next gap in the laurel and waited. When the bear reached the opening it stopped and then dropped at my shot. It got up, however, and disappeared in the laurel before I could shoot again. The bear did not leave a blood trail, but I later learned I had hit it in the lungs. After getting up, the bear ran in front of Sam, who dropped it with a single shot. It was Sam's second bear, and the experience had me hooked on bear hunting.

Sam and his oldest son, Troy, own and operate Gates's Logging, which gives Sam much time in the woods — an invaluable key to being consistently successful at hunting bears. He scouts vast areas to learn where bears are and where they're likely to run when disturbed. Sam also puts in a lot of time getting permission to hunt private land, another key to successful hunting. Sam is also an expert at reading the lay of the land and coordinating transportation to and from drives. Along with commitment, another reason for the Gates Camp success is the members' willingness to learn new areas. While some drives are traditional favorites, losing spots due to posting and other reasons has required the crew

Yr.	BEARS	Yr.	BEARS
1983	2	1992	0
1984	1	1993	2
1985	3	1994	10
1986	3	1995	0
1987	2	1996	6
1988	1	1997	5
1989	1	1998	1
1990	1	1999	6
1991	6		

to be flexible about new locations.

I took my first bear in 1996 while hunting with the crew. It was the second drive on the first morning when the big male came running along the bench below my stand; I anchored it with three shots. My son, Jason, got his first bear in 1997 while a driver on a favorite drive. His is one more story to be told and retold.

One of Sam's favorite memories is the day his daughter, Wendy, shot her bear. Wendy's boyfriend, Wade, was introduced to bear hunting that year, and he liked it so much that he and Wendy were married at the camp.

Some would call the Gates Camp crew lucky. If luck were defined as preparation meeting opportunity, then that would define them. I am blessed to have a place on the Gates roster for another year, and I have another son to introduce to our state's most exciting big game animal.

Of the 50 bears taken since 1983, Stacy Flick has taken 5; Toby Comly, 4; Sam Gates, 3; six others 2 each; and 26 have taken one. Most years include a full roster of 25 hunters. While the crew has grown and changed over the years, a core of about 18 hunters has remained constant. While the camp has averaged three bears a year, two years were shutouts and 1994 was a record year with 10. I don't think there's a more successful group of bear hunters in Pennsylvania. □

The Witness Tree

Penn's Woods Sketchbook / Bob Sopchick

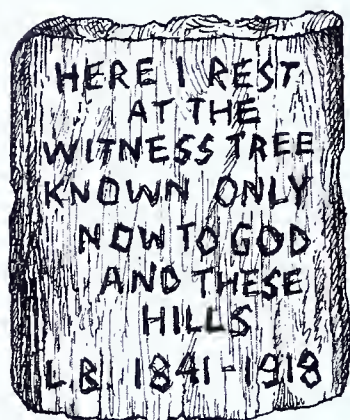
A FARMER IN A YELLOW slicker leans into the slanting rain as he walks, happy to finish the last task of a raw, cold day. He secures a stock gate outside his daughter's bedroom window with wire, knowing that the screeching gate would disturb her sleep.

Back inside, he sits at the kitchen table with a slice of pumpkin pie and hot coffee. His wife braids their young daughter's hair by the fireplace while their son stares out the window. As the chill leaves his bones, the farmer relaxes. All seems right with the world.

"Tell us about the man in the tree," says the boy, refilling his father's cup.

His daughter runs over and pleads, "Please, Daddy, tell us about him. Show us his marker."

The farmer opens a cupboard and takes down a section of warped plank from a row of books. He brushes it off and holds it for them to see the crudely carved epitaph:



His children sit cross-legged before him, eager for the story.

"When your mother and I moved here in 1939 this farm was wild and woolly. Everything was covered in vines and the fields were full of ditches and weeds. We patched up the barn and fixed up this farmhouse and built a new addition where your rooms are.

"One day your Uncle John and me were up on the hill repairing the stone wall when we came to this big dead oak. The trunk of that white oak was about five feet across, and most of the thicker boughs were broken off and laying in the field. I figured to saw the main trunk off about chest high and leave the tall stump as a stand for deer season. It was covered with creeper vines, and after we cleared them away, we started sawing.

"Well, we were making good time with the two-man crosscut 'cause the oak is fairly hollow inside, when I see these words carved into the tree. We thought this person was buried at its base, so we look around and find a low spot. We start digging, but right off we hit a huge boulder. We had a lot to do, so we start sawing again.

"After a while we stop to rest, and I'm mopping my brow when I almost jump outta my skin. Staring down at me from a crack in the tree is a skull. Then I see the whole skeleton in there, and feel bad 'cause we had sawed it right in half.

"That man was inside the tree for almost 21 years. He carved this marker himself, and that oak was his coffin. More than likely he died standing in it. It took some doing, but I discovered that this L.B. was a man named Lyman Baker, and his story began long ago . . .

THE YEAR WAS 1850, and 9-year-old Lyman Baker and his younger brother Matthew filled buckets with drinking water then hung them on a yoke across the back of the mule and rode up the hill where their father and several neighbor men were building a stone fence. The boys cleaned clods from the fieldstone for the men, and by the end of the day the fence had snaked up to a great spreading oak on the crest of the hill.

After supper the boys ran back up to the solitary oak. Lyman hopped up onto the stone wall, pulled Matthew up after him and they climbed into the inviting arms of

the tree. The solemn fields lay in blue shadow, and they climbed higher yet and sat in the rays of the sinking sun.

"If Ma knowed we was this high up in this ol tree she'd be awful mad," said Matthew.

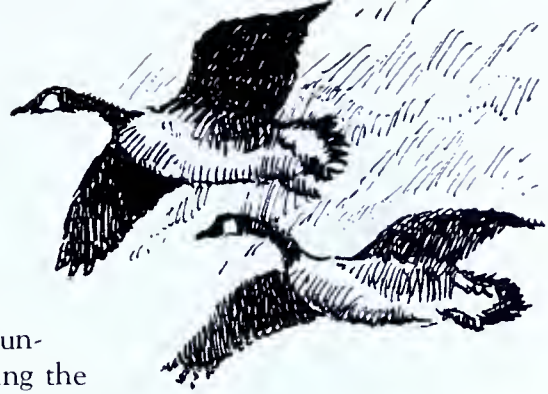
Lyman looked at his brother and smiled. Matthew was as skinny as a squirrel and looked right at home in the tree. "I never saw so much country as this from one place," Lyman said, surveying the panorama of the gentle green river wrapped around the feet of the hills beyond.

A flock of geese on locked wings glided just over them, honking loudly, descending to the river. Their wild, free song was an epiphany for Lyman, swelling in his chest until he thought he would burst. A seed of wanderlust sprouted in him that moment, as surely as the mighty oak had sprouted from an acorn centuries before.

That summer, and in the years that followed, the tree became a sanctuary for the brothers. Their mother had christened the 400-year-old oak the "Witness Tree," because of all the life it had seen passing under and above its boughs.

From their vantage point in the oak the boys saw a string of small islands on the river, a rocky bluff high on a hill, and tendrils of smoke from distant farms, each landmark noted as a future destination full of possibility. Lofty dreams come easy in lofty places, and the brothers spent hours planning expeditions. Sometimes they just lazed in the branches, imagining at the world beyond the rim of their valley. From those sturdy boughs they watched their farm grow and prosper, along with other new farms that became part of the patchwork quilt landscape.

As young men, the brothers were a study in contrast. Lyman was tall and broad-shouldered with the gait of a woodsman, while Matthew was small and rail thin and always scrambled along to keep pace with Lyman when they went hunting. Matthew,





however, was blessed with keen vision and a steady hand, and could shoot at great distances with deadly accuracy.

One misty October morning the brothers were standing side by side in the oak where four huge trunks branched out. They spotted several deer walking along the edge of a field far below. Lyman proposed a plan to stalk them, but Matthew held up his hand to silence him and in one motion cocked the hammer, set the trigger and braced against a trunk. The still air shattered and a roundball whistled through the mists and through the neck of a sleek buck that never heard the shot.

THE VALLEY SEEMED TO grow smaller every day to Lyman, and he ached to strike out on his own. When he was 19 he left home for the north country, where he found work as a lumberman in Potter County. It was tough but satisfying work up there in the Wildcat District, and the boys were a rough bunch. He enjoyed the scenic country, but by the spring of 1861 he was ready to move on.

At that time, news of the approaching war swept through the north woods, followed by a call for volunteers. Lyman jumped at the opportunity to join the 1st Pennsylvania Rifles, better known as the Bucktails, named for the tail of a buck that each man had killed and wore on his hat. In a letter home he wrote that he would stop by on his way to enlist.

Lyman and several other Bucktails pulled into the farmyard in a borrowed wagon drawn by mules. Matthew was waiting on the porch with his rifle, the tail of the buck he had killed pinned to his hat. One of the Bucktails, remarking on Matthew's slight build said, "Hard to tell where man ends and rifle begins."

"Can you shoot?" asked another. Matthew looked at Lyman and smiled broadly. "Some," he said. "See that squirrel settin' on that knot on that big oak yonder?"

"I can see the oak," said the man, squinting.

Using a rail for a rest, Matthew steadied and fired.

After bidding farewell to their parents they rode on out under the Witness Tree.

"There's the mark of your ball above that knot," said a lumberman.

"And there lies my pa's supper," said Matthew. "Let me fetch this squirrel back and I'll be right along."

While they waited for Matthew, Lyman looked up through the oak at the familiar branches dappled with sunlight. With uncertain adventure looming, and in the spirited company of his brother and friends, it was the happiest day he had ever known.

IT WAS THE worst day he had ever known, that sweltering day of July 3, 1863, at a place called Gettysburg. He and Matthew were part of a small brigade skirmishing with the Confederates along a stone wall. They worked their way towards Devil's Den, and their war became a rifleman's war as the enemies exchanged fire. The rebels, using muzzleloaders, were exposed briefly as they reloaded, but the Bucktails were armed with breechloading Sharps rifles and could remain hidden until they fired.

Matthew put on a remarkable display of marksmanship, sending a round through every patch of gray wool visible. The Rebels, seeing that they were being picked off, mounted a terrific charge, and the Bucktails retreated to the stone wall.

Just as they were taking cover, Lyman was sent sprawling by a bullet that hit his boot heel and he crashed headlong into the wall, stunned. Matthew reached back over the wall, and as he yanked Lyman to safety, was hit in the chest.

Lyman held his brother close. Matthew's face was streaked with blue smoke, and his red cheeks paled. He smiled and coughed and said, "Someone over there's a fine shot. It's hard to hit such a skinny person as I was." And with those light words in that tragic place, the littlest Bucktail died.



BACK HOME, LYMAN NAILED Matthew's bucktail to the Witness Tree. In the years after the war he made his living as a market hunter on the Susquehanna Flats, then headed north to New York City where he learned to clerk. It wasn't long before he felt the city closing in, and he turned to the open sea in New Bedford, signing on as a hand on a whaling ship. Years later, when he was traveling in the Midwest he received word that his father had passed, and his mother had moved to Harrisburg to live with her sister.

In Wisconsin he married, but lost both his wife and child in childbirth. In 1885 he returned to Pennsylvania, clerking in the office of a Pittsburgh ironworks. Four years later he left the city, volunteering to help the victims of the Johnstown Flood. Lyman went north again, finally settling in Clearfield.

When he was 77 years old Lyman took ill, and set out to see the Witness Tree one last time. He arrived by foot on a frigid November afternoon to find the farm abandoned and grown wild. The oak looked poorly. It was lightning charred, a bolt having cleaved a wide fissure down its great trunk, bursting its core. Much of the bark had fallen off, and its once great crown held only a few russet leaves.

With a hammer and chisel Lyman carved his epitaph into the tree, then with much difficulty he climbed on top of the stone wall and up the tree where the main boughs branched. Lyman chiseled out the lead ball from above the knot where Matthew had shot the squirrel. He was very tired and cold and he stepped down into a hollow in the tree to take shelter from the wind.

Lyman dreamed a final dream — a peaceable dream — of the great oak softly rustling in a warm summer breeze, leaves billowing against a blue sky, the wide-spreading boughs lifting and falling slowly, becoming then a single motionless image of the tree from afar, a sepia picture fading more until there was only gray light.

THE FARMER ran his hand over the marker. "We made him a proper tombstone, and a coffin of boards sawed from the oak, and with a prayer laid the bones of Lyman Baker to rest on the hill.

"Some people stay all their lives in one place like a tree, and witness all the things great and small that pass by. Other folks, like Lyman Baker, follow the winds like the wild geese. One way is not better than the other, though, as long as we realize that as much wonder lies in an acorn as in an ocean."



Bow



JERRY NAMETH JR., Springdale, above, got his first buck — a 5-point — with a bow in Forest County. **JANELLE WEAVER**, East Earl, right, got her Lancaster County 6-point during her first year of archery hunting.



RICKY HANSEN, Charleroi, got his 4-point in Clearfield County.



BRYAN MOOSE, York, got this 8-point — his first — near New Germantown in Perry County on the last day of the season.

Bucks



BOB CUTMAN, Dauphin, above, stayed in Dauphin County to get this bruiser on October 20 last year. **ZACHARY HEFFERAN**, Butler, below, got his 6-point in Clarion County.



ROBBY WILLIAMS, Allentown, got his 145-pound 8-point in Lehigh County.



DAVID PALMER, Middlebury, Vermont, got this piebald 7-point in Berks County.

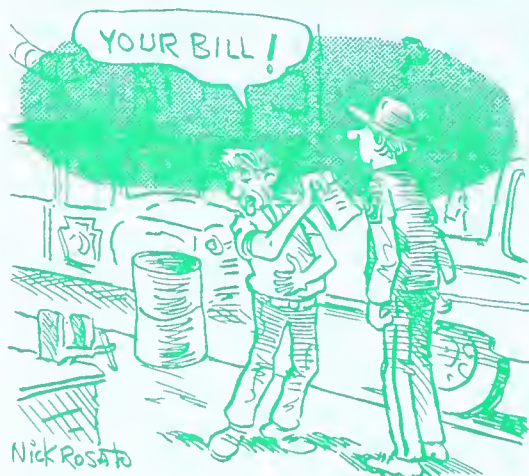


ZACHARY BARKUS, Millersburg, above, with his first buck taken with a bow. The Clarion County 7-point below was taken by 17-year-old **ADAM BONK**, Pittsburgh, who passed on several smaller bucks to take this deer on the last day of the archery season last year.





FIELD NOTES



Ooops!

LYCOMING — Despite having a hectic schedule recently one day, I also had to take my vehicle in for an oil change. I took along some paperwork to complete while in the waiting room, and it wasn't until I had paid the bill and was ready to leave that I remembered the roadkilled deer I had left on the deer rack. The service attendants couldn't have been nicer about it as I sheepishly went back in to apologize.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTICELLO

No Offense Taken

FULTON — My wife, Angela, claims that when all else fails she reads *Game News* to help her fall asleep, and I think she means that as a compliment.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

Appreciated

SCHUYLKILL — Eric Lutsey and others from the Orwigsburg Boy Scout Troop constructed 20 bluebird boxes and erected them on SGLs 227 and 257. Thanks to these boys, the Tuscarora and Atlas bluebird trails are completely refurbished, providing nesting sites for cavity nesting birds and hours of viewing pleasure for bird enthusiasts.

— WCO JOHN DENCHAK, GORDON

Fairest of All

TRAINING SCHOOL — To learn how to use video equipment, my classmates and I took turns shooting footage of each other. Before the session, however, I noticed Trainee Schmidt spending a lot of time in front of a mirror. Dan, I may call you "Hollywood," but I don't think the fashion magazines are interested in WCOs for models.

— TRAINEE JONATHAN S. ZUCK, HARRISBURG

Death Wish

While driving one morning I noticed a deer bounding off a bank, so I slowed down to avert a collision, but it ran right into my door. I thought that if I would have been going a little faster it would have landed right on the deer rack.

— LMO GEORGE J. MILLER, MARIENVILLE



Fooled 'Em

BUCKS — Anti-hunting sentiment is common in some urban areas, but Richard and Tim Smith had to chuckle when a car stopped and the occupants got out to chase the geese away from the hunters. Needless to say, the decoys didn't fly.

— WCO WILLIAM F. DINGMAN III, FOUNTAINVILLE

Give 'Em a Chance

McKEAN — I've gotten plenty of reports of trophy bucks being seen here, along with "I hope it makes it until hunting season." Unfortunately, some do not. Please give others a fair chance at these bucks by reporting spotlighting after hours and poaching activity you might see. The toll free Game Commission region office phone numbers are listed in *Game News* and the hunting and trapping digest.

— WCO LEN GROSHEK, SMETHPORT

Laid Down the Law

MONROE — Early last spring my wife, Kelly, and I were foster parents to an orphaned bear cub, but it all came to a sudden halt when she told me that it was time to get the cub to a rehabilitation center. Our own child was due any day, and although she wouldn't have any trouble waking every couple of hours for feeding our baby during the night, a screaming bear cub was another matter.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Rescued

DAUPHIN — I responded to a call about a deer hit by a vehicle, but as soon as I arrived the doe died. I was getting ready to load her on my rack when I noticed movement in her abdomen. I immediately performed a cesarean section to extract its fawn. The resilient little fawn began to stand in my vehicle on the way to the animal rehabilitator, and three weeks later it was still doing well.

— WCO MARK FAIR, MIDDLETOWN

Masked Bandit

BEDFORD — Deputy Tom Shippey told me that his grandson left a half-filled milkshake in the cupholder in his car and, because it was so hot, left the windows down overnight. The next morning the raccoon tracks on the hood told the whole story. The straw was licked clean and not one drop of the milkshake had been spilled.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE



Bigger Problem

SUSQUEHANNA — When I arrived here 17 years ago, calls about nuisance beavers kept me busy throughout the spring and summer. In the last few years, however, calls about nuisance bears have become just as numerous.

— WCO CHUCK ARCOVITCH, UNIONDALE

Unusual Comrades

TRAINING SCHOOL — I've always been repulsed by maggots, but after wildlife forensics class I have a new appreciation for them. I learned that maggots can help in estimating the time of death for many wildlife species, which is useful in solving poaching cases. I also learned that WCOs have some strange partners in the protection of wildlife.

— TRAINEE RICHARD W. JOYCE, HARRISBURG

Rare Sightings

TIOGA — I was driving on Route 287 north of English Center when a van parked partly on the road caused me to swerve. I had been so intent on looking at the van that I nearly hit a timber rattlesnake coiled in the middle of the road, which was the reason the van was sitting on the shoulder. I removed the yellow 4-foot snake with my snare pole, and then I realized that it was the second rattlesnake I had dealt with that week.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE,
MIDDLEBURY CENTER



Could Be

BUTLER/LAWRENCE — WES Kevin Thompson and I were presenting a program for some Cub Scouts, and while talking about bird dogs, one of the scouts told us that since sheep dogs protect sheep, bird dogs must protect birds. Maybe that explains why I don't have any luck when I'm out hunting with my Lab; she must be leading me away from the birds.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PORTERSVILLE

Goin' Strong

HUNTINGDON — Despite faithfully submitting Field Notes, mine don't always make the cut, which really doesn't bother me, except that at my age, it's the only way my friends and relatives know I'm still alive.

— WCO JOHN B. ROLLER, HUNTINGDON

Sign of the Times

ELK — My neighbor, 70-year-old Bud Perry, was walking on SGL 25 when he encountered a young boy on an ATV who asked him where he was going. When Bud told him he was walking to a distant landmark, the boy remarked that it was a long way off for a man his age. Bud said he couldn't help but think that if the boy spends all his time riding the ATV, he wouldn't be able to walk at all when he got older.

— WCO DOTY McDOWELL, ST MARYS

The Way it Was

TRAINING SCHOOL — I was on field assignment with LMO Steve Spangler when we came to a fallen tree that was blocking an access road on SGL 170. Expecting him to retrieve a chainsaw from the back of the truck, I was surprised when he handed me an ax and said, "Time to learn about land management." I guess he wanted me to see how it was done in the old days.

— TRAINEE TRAVIS J. ANDERSON, HARRISBURG

Spoke Too Soon

BRADFORD — After returning a call from a John Walker from Wells Township about beavers, I asked what problems the beavers were causing. To my surprise, I was told that there wasn't a problem; he just wanted to know how to keep them on the property. It seems the whole family enjoys watching them.

— WCO WILLIAM BOWER, TROY

A Little Respect

MONROE — This past spring I responded to calls about a deer that attacked a dog, and a black bear that swatted and killed a dog. While these incidents are rare and unfortunate, both involved the parents' protective instinct response that most animals exhibit when their young are most vulnerable.

— WCO VICTOR ROSA, FLEETVILLE

Greenhouse Effect

ADAMS — We're all familiar with the saying, a fox in a henhouse, but having one in a "hothouse" isn't all that great, either. On one of those unbearable hot, humid days last summer, the Springhill Garden Center had a sick fox enter one of their greenhouses. It turns out that the fox had a broken jaw and was extremely emaciated. After several minutes of crawling around in the greenhouse in the intense heat chasing the fox, the owner and I were emaciated, too.

— WCO LARRY D. HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

Out of the Sky

TRAINING SCHOOL — A classmate and I were on field assignment near the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon when a meteor crashing through the atmosphere interrupted the scenery and got our attention in a hurry. I guess it really is God's Country.

— TRAINEE GLEN CAMPBELL, HARRISBURG

More than She Could "Bear"

CLINTON — I trapped a nuisance bear near a residence in Renovo, and the homeowner and several children enthusiastically watched as I attached a tag to each ear and removed a tooth. After pulling the tooth, however, I was giving everyone a closer look when a little girl fainted in the arms of her babysitter.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

"Wild Story, Mate"

LYCOMING — Recently, a man asked me how our "fisher cats" are doing, so I politely told him that our American fisher reintroduction program is doing just fine. He then became somewhat agitated and told me that the Game Commission brought the original fisher cats from Australia in 1863, in exchange for rabbits that were needed there to dig holes so the kangaroos would break their legs and, thus, keep the population under control. I never did point out my shoulder patch that indicates the Game Commission was established in 1895.

— WCO TERRY D. WILLS, WILLIAMSPORT

Surprise!

SOMERSET — Wendy Boyer was half asleep while sunning in the backyard of her Berlin home when she heard soft footsteps on the grass. She didn't pay attention to it, however, until she felt something wet on her arm. When she opened her eyes she was face-to-face with a young bear that was licking the suntan lotion from her arm. Wendy said she couldn't say if she made it to the house before the bear reached the woods.

— WCO DANIEL W. JENKINS, BERLIN

In a Fog

BUCKS — As the interior of the Ford Bronco filled with a yellow haze, WCO Will Dingman discovered that a fire extinguisher discharging within a vehicle while cruising down the highway can be a distraction. It's a good thing he wasn't using his cell phone.

— WCO STEPHEN T. HANCZAR, OTTSVILLE



Quagmire

FRANKLIN — I was sent to retrieve a fawn that had fallen into a manure pit at a pig farm, and when I got there I was greeted by two fire trucks, an ambulance, the local news and a multitude of onlookers. We tried for two hours to get the animal within range of my catchpole, but it never got close enough as it swam in circles in the middle of the pit, which was about 12 feet deep. The farm owner gave us a small boat, and we finally captured what turned out to be a red fox. After a quick bath the fox was released.

— WCO BARRY A. LEONARD, CHAMBERSBURG

Double Delight

MIFFLIN — One night last summer Deputy Grassmyer and I were driving through Licking Creek Valley when something flashed in the headlights. Stopping to investigate we spotted a barred owl standing on a dirt road with a mink it had just killed. It's not often that you see two of nature's top predators at once.

— WCO JEFFREY G. MOCK, LEWISTOWN

Easy on Shells

INDIANA — HTE instructor John O'Hara is an avid archer and enjoys some small game hunting, but he doesn't necessarily consider himself a grouse hunter, despite getting five in the past two years. I told John that wasn't bad, and then he said, "I guess not, considering I hadn't fired a shot; they all flew into the side of my house."

— WCO PATRICK L. SNICKLES, MARION CENTER

Mistaken ID

TRAINING SCHOOL — We had a class on identifying edible plants in the wild, but after seeing Trainee Kris Krebs mistake sour cream for Cool Whip and vinegar for maple syrup, I wondered whether we needed a class on identifying packaged food.

— TRAINEE CARL M. SZYMANSKI, HARRISBURG

That Explains It

HUNTINGDON — WCO John Roller and I were doing a program at a school when one of the kids mentioned that I was taller than John. "I'm just as tall, but my legs aren't straight," John said.

— WCO PHILIP J. LUKISH, ALEXANDRIA

Right on the Money

SOMERSET — A big thank you to PBS Coal for letting me use their digital scales at their mine near Meyersdale to weigh a nuisance bear. After completing the necessary processing of ear tags, lip tattoo and tooth removal, I drove up and weighed the trap with the bear inside. After releasing the bear onto game lands, I went back and weighed the trap again, and the difference was an even 500 pounds.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Cooperation

JEFFERSON — An individual from Ohio provided information about game law violations involving four men, and then he returned on three occasions to testify at trials. For each trip he lost a day's pay and incurred commuting expenses. This non-resident certainly went above and beyond for wildlife. I would also like to thank the Jefferson County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. After learning of the financial sacrifices that the individual incurred, the federation came up with reward money to help offset his costs. This ended up being a case of sportsmen from two states helping each other protect wildlife.

— WCO ROGER A. HARTLESS, BROOKVILLE



Firsthand Look

LUZERNE — While target shooting at the SGL 141 rifle range, Rich Cortez fired three rounds downrange. Much to his surprise, he saw a bear saunter out of the nearby woods. The bruin placed its two front paws on Rich's target, seemingly examining his shot group. Apparently, the bear was sizing up the hunter's marksmanship skills before the upcoming season.

— DEPUTY PHILIP WHITE, WILKES-BARRE

Incognito

BUTLER — I was admiring the beautiful homes near the Butler Country Club when I noticed an impressive statue of a large 8-point buck alongside a driveway. I couldn't recall seeing it there before, and when I stopped, its ear flicked and I realized Mr. Whitetail had duped me again. It's bad enough deer evade me in the woods when I'm hunting, but now in a paved driveway?

— WCO MARIO L. PICCIRILLI, RENFREW

Partnerships work to preserve 160 acres

REPRESENTATIVES of the Game Commission, the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Blue Mountain Chapter of Safari Club International recently joined other local partners in celebrating two land acquisition projects that will result in the preservation of 160 acres next to SGL 170 in Cumberland and Perry counties.

"Today, we first recognize the successful transfer of the 79-acre Witmer tract to the Game Commission, following the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy's unprecedented pay-off of its mortgage one year earlier than anticipated," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "This accomplishment could not have occurred without the tremendous support of local conservation-minded residents, businesses and organizations."

In August 1999, on behalf of the Game Commission, the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy purchased the Witmer tract at an estate auction for \$175,500. The Board of Game Commissioners authorized the agency to pay the Conservancy \$31,600, the maximum \$400 per acre the agency may pay for land out of the Game Fund. To cover the remainder of its loan, the Conservancy organized the Miller's Gap Project Campaign Committee and began a fundraising effort.

In less than a year, the Conservancy was able to pay off its loan and transfer ownership of the property to the Game

Commission. Among the major contributions to the project were: \$80,000 from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; \$13,000 from the state Department of Community and Economic Development, presented by Reps. Patricia Vance (R-Cumberland) and Allan Egolf (R-Perry); \$8,800 from the Blue Mountain Chapter of Safari Club International; \$7,000 from the Pennsylvania chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation; \$5,200 from the Alexander M. Stewart, MD Foundation; \$5,000 from the Cumberland County Commissioners; \$5,000 from the Stony Creek Valley Coalition; \$2,600 from the Keystone Trails Asso-



Bob D'Angelo

BOB LIGHTNER, left, executor of the Lightner tract, with PGC Executive Director **VERN ROSS** as Central Pennsylvania Conservancy Chair **Carol Witzeman** looks on.



Bob D'Angelo

The Game Commission and Central Pennsylvania Conservancy joined other partners in celebrating two projects that will preserve 160 acres in Cumberland and Perry counties. Pictured, L to R, are Representative PAT VANCE (Cumberland Co.); VERN ROSS, PGC executive director; JUDI STACK, Stony Creek Valley Coalition; DR. TOM PAPOUTSIS, Blue Mt. Chapter SCI; DON HECKMAN, PA NWTF; KEN ELLENBERGER, Susquehanna River Waterfowlers; STEPHEN MOHR, PGC Commissioner; and Representative ALLAN EGOLF (Perry County).

ciation; \$1,630 from the Appalachian Audubon Society; \$1,500 from the Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club; \$1,000 from the Susquehanna River Waterfowlers Association and its Wetlands Trust affiliate; \$1,000 from the Penn Cumberland Garden Club; \$1,000 from Texas Eastern Gas Transmission Company; \$1,000 from Ramsey Koury; and contributions from more than 230 other individuals businesses and organizations.

Ross noted that the success of the Witmer tract effort helped pave the way to the second project involving the Lightner tract.

"We also join together to kick off the fundraising effort to purchase the nearby 80-acre tract from the Lightner family," Ross said. "The ultimate goal is to transfer this parcel to the Game Commission as well.

"What is critically important in relation to this parcel is that it had been subdivided and planned for development. But, thanks to the willingness of the Lightner family, we now will be able to save it for wildlife and outdoor recreation."

For this purchase, the Conservancy already has lined up several financial partners, including: \$6,000 from the Blue Mountain Chapter of Safari Club International; \$5,000 from the Alfred and Helen Buck Trust Fund; \$5,000 from the Stony Creek Valley Coalition; \$3,000 from the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation; and \$2,000 from the Susquehanna River Water-fowlers Association and its Wetlands Trust affiliate.

"While there are many people we need to thank, I certainly want to highlight Carol Witzeman, Central Pennsylvania Conservancy president, and Bob Dunn, Blue Mountain Chapter of Safari Club International board member, for their outstanding efforts to spearhead the Miller's Gap Project Campaign Committee," Ross said. "On behalf of Pennsylvania's hunters and trappers, I thank you both for your dedication and commitment."

The Miller's Gap Project Campaign Committee will purchase the Lightner tract, which borders the Appalachian Trail, with a loan from the First Bank of Marysville. Now part of SGL 170, the Witmer tract is part of the Darlington Trail.

As these properties are within a few minutes of downtown Harrisburg and Carlisle, both events signify the success and ongoing concerted local efforts to preserve open space and com-

bat suburban/urban sprawl.

Both properties are on or near the summit of Blue Mountain and are part of the Kittatinny Ridge, which is a prime hiking area and is considered by

Audubon-Pennsylvania to be an Important Bird Area critical to migratory and non-migratory birds. SGL 170 currently is comprised of nearly 9,100 acres.

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman added to PGC website

TO ENCOURAGE more women to discover the joys of outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania, the Game Commission has added a section on its website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) to promote the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) program. BOW is an international program designed for women 18 and older who are interested in learning more about hunting, shooting, boating, camping and other outdoor activities.

The new site includes upcoming BOW programs and contact information; details about BOW and the history of the program; a listing of BOW sponsors; and testimonials from previous BOW attendees. The site also includes a listing of upcoming "Women in the Outdoors" events, sponsored by the National Wild Turkey Federation, and "Women on Target" events, sponsored by the National Rifle Association.

Initiated by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in 1991, BOW is aimed at beginners and is designed to be supportive and non-intimidating. The workshops offer dozens of different classes including: basic firearm and archery; firearm and archery safety; basic fishing; camping skills; boating and canoeing; orienteering; and other exciting outdoor activities.

In addition to basic BOW programs, the agency also sponsors "Beyond BOW," which provides topic- or skill-

specific events that offer more in-depth experiences; and "Mini BOW," which offers half-day or full-day events intended to spark interest in outdoors recreational opportunities.

Surveys by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service show that the number of female hunters increased 33 percent from 1980 to 1990, to slightly more than one million nationwide, but that number dipped slightly during the first half of the 1990s. In Pennsylvania, about 18 percent of those who enroll in Hunter-Trapper Education classes are females.

Since 1996, when the Game Commission started BOW in Pennsylvania, 440 attendees have participated in the programs. But the demand to take part in BOW was greater than the agency could bear. To address this demand, the Game Commission hired an outreach coordinator, Lori Neely.

Before joining the Game Commission, Neely served as the coordinator for the Michigan United Conservation Club's "Michigan Out-of-Doors Women" program. Neely earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology from Michigan State University. A native of California, she graduated from New Hope-Solebury High School in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

"I have had a life-long appreciation of the great outdoors instilled in me by my family," Neely said. "But it wasn't until after my college years that I found

mentors willing to share their bowhunting skills with me. This will be the third year that I participate in bowhunting, and I now want to share my excitement for hunting and the outdoors with others.”

In addition to managing the BOW program, Neely will assist in the agency’s Youth Field Day activities and other outreach and mentoring programs that promote the state’s hunting and trapping heritage.

WCO Clark commended for life-saving action

WCO DANIEL I. CLARK of Juniata County recently was commended for his actions that saved the life of a Huntingdon County woman who was choking at a restaurant.

“Day in and day out, our Wildlife Conservation Officers are called on to perform many duties for the public,” said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. “However, no duty can be more honorable than when one of our employees is called upon to help save the life of a fellow human being. WCO Clark’s quick actions to perform

the Heimlich maneuver dislodged the blockage that was preventing the woman from breathing.”

“The Huntingdon ambulance had already been summoned, but I don’t believe it would have made it in time,” Kathlyn Reed wrote in a letter to Ross. “Thank God that your employees receive training in life-saving situations and not just wildlife conservation.”

A graduate of the 18th Class of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, Clark has served as a Wildlife Conservation Officer since 1982.

Snyder honored at IHEA conference

KEITH SNYDER, Pennsylvania Game Commission Hunter-Trapper Education Division chief, recently was honored as the 2001 Hunter Education Administrator of the Year at the International Hunter Education Association conference held in Missoula, Montana.

The award was presented by Tim Pool, National Bowhunter Education Foundation executive director, who recognized Snyder for his efforts in grant development and bowhunter educa-

tion program enhancement as part of the Pennsylvania Game Commission’s initiation of an agency administered and operated bowhunter education program in 2000.

Snyder graduated with the 20th Class from the Game Commission’s Ross Leffler School of Conservation and served as a wildlife conservation officer in Lackawanna and Dauphin counties before becoming HTE division chief. He’s a 1976 graduate of Penn State University.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Tangled elk rescued

GAME COMMISSION employees this past August rescued an elk that had become entangled in a pile of scrap wire in the Hevner Run area in western Clinton County. Campers who found the elk contacted the Clinton County Communications Center, which passed the information on to the Game Commission, said WCO John Wasserman. Rawley Cogan, PGC elk biologist, and Jon DeBerti, Game Commission biologist aide, were able to quickly find the elk because it was wearing a radio-telemetry collar.



John Wasserman

Cogan noted that the exhausted elk became anchored to a tree by the wire.

It was not badly cut by the wire, but it could not lie down without strangling itself, and it certainly would have died if the concerned citizens had not taken the time to contact the Game Commission.

State Game Lands tours

THE FOLLOWING tours are being offered to give people a chance to explore state game lands and see what the Game Commission is doing to manage these lands for wildlife and people.

Southeast Region

October 14, SGLs 110 and 211, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Berks County and Dauphin County. The SGL 211 tour will begin at the west end of the valley.

Northcentral Region

October 7, 1 p.m., SGL 44 near Ridgway. From Ridgway, south on Rt. 949 for eight miles to Game Commission road on the left. Then go six-tenths of a mile to the PGC Food and Cover buildings. High clearance vehicles are suggested. Some walks through the woods and hills will be taken, so appropriate footwear and outdoor clothing is advised.

October 7, 11 a.m., SGLs 12 and 36, Bradford County. Drive through begins on State Route 154, approximately one mile north of Wheelerville.

October 14, Noon - 4:00 p.m., SGL 252, Lycoming and Union counties. Drive through tour, starting at the maintenance building located on Alvira Road.

Northwest Region

October 14, 1:30 p.m., SGL 54, Jefferson County. Meet at Dutch Hill, along Rt. 949, between Heath Pump Station and Spring Creek Road intersection. The tour will be guided and will include driving on SGL access roads and some light walking. Vehicles with high clearance are recommended.

Ned Smith art auction

THE 8TH annual Ned Smith art auction, to benefit the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, will be held October 13, at the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area. Viewing and silent auction begins at 10 a.m.; regular auc-

tion begins at 1 p.m. Several Ned Smith originals will be featured, along with many of his prints, plus the works of many other well-known artists. The Middle Creek visitors center is south of Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County.

Waterfowl/migratory game bird seasons

DOVE HUNTERS will once again have a triple-split season. For the first season (Sept. 1-Oct. 5), hunting will start at noon and continue through sunset. The second and third splits will be Oct. 27-Nov. 24, and Dec. 26-Dec. 31, with hunting hours a half-hour before sunrise until sunset.

Pennsylvania's woodcock season will open Saturday, Oct. 20, and continue through Saturday, Nov. 17, a marked increase over recent years when a conservative approach was taken in selecting seasons within the Keystone State. "This year Pennsylvania went with the same 30-day woodcock season most other states in the East are selecting," said PGC biologist John Dunn. "We were guided in this decision by the results of a two-year woodcock survival study in Pennsylvania, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, which indicated that hunting has little impact on woodcock survival. What the study did point out was the need to focus on developing and maintaining habitat critical to woodcock."

The daily limit of three birds and six in possession after opening day remains unchanged for the 2001 woodcock season.

All migratory game bird hunters, including those afield for doves and woodcock, are required to obtain and carry a migratory game bird license (\$3 for residents, \$6 for nonresidents) in

addition to a general hunting license. This applies to all resident, nonresident, junior, senior and lifetime license holders. All waterfowl hunters age 16 and over must possess a federal migratory game bird (duck) stamp.

The 2001-2002 waterfowl seasons and bag limits include a regular 30-day goose season and a two-bird limit, up from last year's 15-day season and a one-bird limit. "A large breeding population and excellent production in 2001 have paved the way for expanded hunting opportunities for Atlantic Population Canada geese," Dunn said. "The estimated number of breeding pairs of Atlantic Population Canada geese increased to a record high 146,000 pairs, 57 percent above the 2000 survey."

Dunn noted that nesting studies by the Canadian Wildlife Service along Hudson and Ungava bays indicated the number of nests increased by 50 percent over last year and gosling survival appears good. "Overall production looks excellent across the Ungava region, and a fall flight of 900,000 to one million Atlantic Population Canada geese is expected to head south this fall," Dunn said. "The recovery of this population of Canada geese is continuing and the future looks bright as birds from the excellent production years in 1997 and 1998 enter the breeding population."

2001 Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons

Species	Open	Close	Daily	Possession
Mourning Doves	Sept. 1 Oct. 27 Dec. 26	Oct. 5 Nov. 24 Dec. 31	12	24
Woodcock	Oct. 20	Nov. 17	3	6
Virginia, Sora Rails	Sept. 1	Nov. 9	25	25
Moorhens	Sept. 1	Nov. 9	15	30
Common (Wilson's) Snipe	Oct. 20	Nov. 24	8	16

Dunn credited the support and understanding of hunters, as well as financial support from organizations such as the Susquehanna River Waterfowlers Association, which enabled wildlife managers to close the seasons from 1995 to 1999, and launch intensive research.

The Southern James Bay population of Canada geese, the predominant migratory geese in northwest Pennsylvania, nests on Akimiski Island, Northwest Territories and in the James Bay lowlands of Ontario. This past spring, 102,700 Canada geese were counted on aerial surveys, which was 15 percent higher than in 2000, and a fall flight larger than last year is expected.

The 2001-2002 duck seasons include 60 hunting days and a daily limit of six birds, which are the same as the last two years.

"Breeding populations of most ducks are above long-term averages, and habitat conditions in eastern North America were good for duck nesting and production," Dunn said.

Although mallard and wood duck breeding pairs decreased from 1999, they still are near long-term averages and can support a 60-day duck season.

The daily bag limit of ducks has remained at six, and the daily limit on scaup has remained at three.

The size of the canvasback popula-

tion was not large enough in 2001 to support a season for the entire 60-day duck hunting season, so the season length has been reduced to 20 days and the bag limit remains at one.

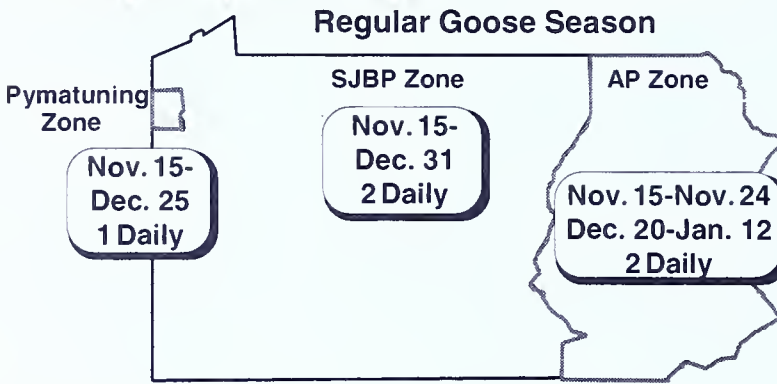
In addition to a regular Pennsylvania hunting license, persons 16 and older must have a Federal Waterfowl and Migratory Bird Stamp, referred to as a "Duck Stamp," signed in ink across its face. All hunters, regardless of age, must have a Pennsylvania Migratory Game Bird License to hunt waterfowl and other migratory birds. All migratory game bird hunters in the United States are required to complete a Harvest Information Program survey when they purchase a state migratory game bird license. The survey information is then forwarded to the USFWS.

"By answering the questions on the survey card, hunters will improve survey efficiency and the quality of information used to track the harvest of migratory birds for management purposes," Dunn said.

(An early statewide season for resident Canada geese ran from Sept. 1-25, with bag limits increased to five daily and 10 in possession. In 2000, only the southeast portion of the state had a daily bag limit of five and a possession limit of 10, while the remainder of the state was restricted to limits of three and six, respectively.)

2001-2002 Waterfowl Seasons

Regular Canada Goose Hunting Season



All of Pennsylvania will have a regular Canada goose season. However, season lengths and bag limits will vary by area as follows:

In that portion of Pennsylvania east of Interstate-83 from the Maryland line to inter-

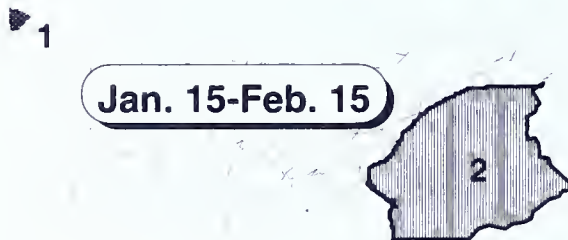
section of US Rt. 30, to intersection of SR 441 to intersection of I-283, east of I-283 to I-83, east of I-83 to intersection of I-81, east of I-81 to intersection of US Rt. 322, east of US Rt. 322 to intersection of SR 147, east of SR 147 to intersection of I-180, east of I-180 to intersection of US Rt. 220, east of US Rt. 220 to the New York line, The season: Nov. 15 - 24 & Dec. 20 - Jan. 12 with a 2 goose daily limit, 4 in possession.

In the remainder of the state (note exception) the regular goose season will be Nov. 15 - Dec. 31, with a limit of 2 geese per day, 4 in possession.

In that area in Crawford County south of SR 198 from the Ohio line to intersection of SR 18, to intersection of US Rt. 322/SR18, to intersection of SR 3013, south to the Crawford/Mercer County line, the season is Nov. 15 - Dec. 25 with a limit of 1 goose per day, 2 in possession.

Late Canada Goose Hunting (Statewide)

Late Goose Season



5 geese daily, 10 in possession

Exceptions: (1) Closed in Crawford County in the area south of SR 198 from the Ohio line to intersection of SR 18 to intersection of US Rt. 322/SR18, to intersection of SR 3013, south to the Crawford/Mercer line.

2) Closed in the area east of I-83 from Maryland line to intersection of US Rt. 30, to intersection of SR 441, to intersection of I-283, east of

I-283 to I-83, east of I-83 to intersection of I-81, east of I-81 to intersection of I-80, and south of I-80 to New Jersey line.

For the record, an early Canada goose season was held statewide, Sept. 1 - 25. A Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day was held Sept. 22.

Duck Seasons - Ducks, sea ducks, coots and mergansers

Lake Erie Zone — Canvasbacks: Dec. 14-Jan. 5; Ducks, coots and mergansers: Oct. 29-Nov. 3 and Nov. 8-Jan. 9

Northwest Zone — Canvasbacks: Dec. 1-24; Ducks, coots and mergansers: Oct. 6-20 and Nov. 3-Dec. 27

North Zone — Canvasbacks: Nov. 2-24; Ducks, coots and mergansers: Oct. 6-Nov. 24 and Dec. 22-Jan. 10; and

South Zone — Canvasbacks: Dec. 1-24; Ducks, coots and mergansers: Oct. 6-13 and Nov. 15-Jan. 15.

All ducks: 6 daily; daily limit may not include more than 4 mallards including 2 hens, 1 black duck, 1 pintail, 1 canvasback, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous tree duck, 2 wood ducks, 2 redheads, 4 scoters and 3 scaup.

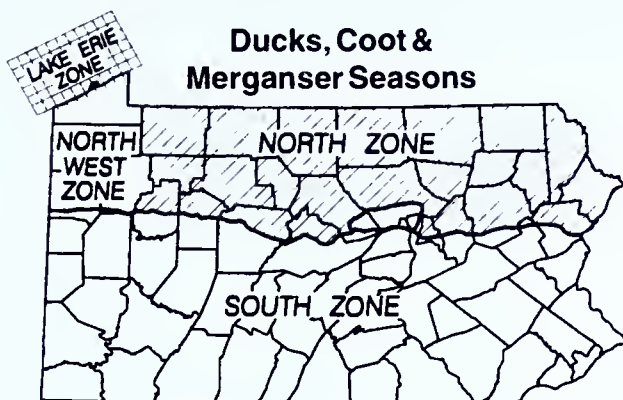
Mergansers: 5 daily; not more than 1 hooded merganser daily.

Coots: 15 daily.

Atlantic brant: 2 daily.

Snow geese: 15 daily.

Possession limit is twice the daily limit, except snow geese, which is unlimited.



Atlantic brant (All Zones): Oct. 6-Dec. 7

Snow geese (All Zones): Nov. 6-March 9

Harlequin ducks, swans and white-fronted geese: No open season.

Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area: shooting days are Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, one-half hour before sunrise to 12:30 p.m. Ducks: Oct. 6-20 and Nov. 3-Dec. 21. Geese: Nov. 16-Dec. 21.

Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area: Controlled shooting sections will be open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to 1:30 p.m. Geese and ducks: Nov. 15, 17, 19, 20, 22 and 24; Dec. 20, 22, 24, 27, 29 and 31; and Jan. 3, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 12.

Hunters encouraged to report banded birds

Hunters are encouraged to call 1-800-327-BAND (2263), to report banded ducks and geese they harvest. Callers will be asked, in addition to band numbers, where, when and what species were killed.

Additionally, hunters who harvest geese in the vicinity of Pymatuning are encouraged to look for small metal-tags placed in the web-portion of the goose's feet. Web-tags were placed on more than 500 newly hatched goslings in April and May as part of a study to examine gosling production. If a goose has a web-tag, hunters are asked to report the tag number to the Game Commission's Northwest Region Office at 1-877-877-0299 (toll-free). Hunters should not call the Northwest Region to report a leg-band. An operator will ask where and when the hunter harvested the goose and for the web-tag number. Hunters who call can leave their name and telephone number to be contacted to receive information on where and when the gosling was tagged.

Summary of Federal Regulations

Notice: The material below is only a summary. Each hunter should also consult the actual Federal Regulations which may be found in Title 50, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 20. In addition to State regulations, the following Federal rules also apply to the taking, possession, shipping, transporting and storing of migratory game birds.

Restriction. No person shall take migratory game birds:

- With a trap, snare, net, crossbow, rifle, pistol, revolver, swivel gun, shotgun larger than 10-gauge, punt gun, battery gun, machine gun, fishhook, poison, drug, explosive or stupefying substance.
- With a shotgun capable of holding more than three shells, unless it is plugged with a one piece filler which is incapable of removal without disassembling the gun.
- From a sink box (a low floating device, having a depression affording the hunter a means of concealment beneath the surface of the water).
- From or with the aid or use of a car or other motor-driven land conveyance, or any aircraft.
- From or by means of any motor boat or sail boat unless the motor has been completely shut off and/or the sail furled, and its progress therefrom has ceased.
- By the use or aid of live decoys. All live, tame or captive ducks and geese shall be removed for a period of 10 consecutive days prior to hunting, and confined within an enclosure which substantially reduces the audibility of their calls and totally conceals such tame birds from the sight of migratory waterfowl.
- Using records or tapes of migratory bird calls or sounds, or electrically amplified imitations of bird calls.
- By driving, rallying or chasing birds with any motorized conveyance or any sail boat to put them in the range of hunters.
- By the aid of baiting (placing feed such as corn, wheat, salt or other feed to constitute a lure or enticement), or on or over any baited area. Hunters should be aware that a baited area is considered to be baited for 10 days after the removal of the bait.

Closed Season. No person shall take migratory game birds during the closed season.

Waterfowl hunting is not permitted on Sundays.

Shooting or Falconry Hours. No person shall take migratory game birds except during the hours open to shooting and falconry as prescribed.

Daily Bag Limit. No person shall take in any one day more than one daily bag limit.

Field Possession Limit. No person shall possess more than one daily bag limit while in the field or while returning from the field to one's car, hunting camp, home, etc.

Wanton Waste. All migratory game birds killed or crippled shall be retrieved, if possible, and retained in the custody of the hunter in the field.

Tagging. No person shall give, put or leave any migratory game birds at any place or in the custody of another person unless the birds are tagged by the hunter with the following information: the hunter's signature and address; the total number of birds involved, by species; and the dates such birds were killed. No person or business shall receive or have in custody any migratory game birds belonging to another person unless such birds are tagged.

Possession of Live Birds. Wounded birds reduced to possession shall be immediately killed and included in the daily bag limit.

Dressing. No person shall completely field dress any migratory game bird (except doves) and then transport the birds from the field. The head or one fully feathered wing must remain attached to all such birds while being transported from the field to one's home or to a migratory bird preservation facility.

Nontoxic Shot, Shot Size. NONTOXIC SHOT must be used while hunting ducks, geese and/or coots in Pennsylvania; the possession of lead shot while hunting ducks, geese and/or coots is unlawful. Shot for waterfowl hunting may not be larger than T size. Nontoxic shot types approved by the USFWS are: steel shot; steel shot with coating (1% of either copper, nickel, zinc chromate, or zinc chloride), bismuth-tin, tungsten-iron, tungsten-polymer and tungsten-matrix.

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. The law requires that each waterfowl hunter 16 years of age and older must carry on his person a valid Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, or duck stamp, signed in ink across its face.

For additional information on federal regulations, contact Senior Resident Agent, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Elizabeth, NJ 07201; 1-973-645-5910.

Waterfowl hunters cautioned about eating mergansers

BASED on studies conducted the past two decades in Pennsylvania and New York, mergansers, especially common and red-breasted, in the Lake Erie region have been found with varying levels of contaminants, including PCBs.

Mergansers consume fish and other aquatic organisms that may cause a concentration of contaminants in body tissue. Similar consumption advisories have been issued for certain species of fish found in these same waters.

For this reason, the Game Commission cautions hunters from consuming any mergansers. Other waterfowl

should be skinned and the fat removed before cooking. Stuffing should be discarded after cooking and should not be consumed. Hunters should not eat more than two meals of waterfowl per month.

Since mergansers from the Lake Erie area are likely to migrate to other areas of Pennsylvania, the Game Commission felt it was important to make all hunters aware of these basic health guidelines.

Last year, Pennsylvania's nearly 40,000 waterfowl hunters reported harvesting 4,000 mergansers.

Waterfowlers reminded about electronic decoy prohibition

GAME COMMISSION Bureau of Law Enforcement Director Dave Overcash reminded hunters that the use of electronic or electrically powered decoys is illegal in Pennsylvania. Under current regulations, the use of any electronic contrivance or device that does not have specific approval by the Board of Game Commissioners is prohibited.

"Several waterfowl hunters expressed confusion about the legality of these devices, since some are battery-

operated," Overcash said. "Since batteries provide electric power, the use of battery-powered decoys also is illegal in Pennsylvania."

PGC biologist John Dunn noted that the USFWS is concerned about increased harvest rates by hunters using such devices. "Increased harvest rates could result in reduced waterfowl populations, which potentially could result in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shortening waterfowl seasons," Dunn said.

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

A new hunting license, a brand new season. What do amber fields glimmering with frost on an October morning, or that ridgetop oak stand, have in store for you this year? These are things that dreams are made of.

License to Dream

“SIGN HERE,” my husband said, handing me the pen and pointing to a blank line on the paper.

“What’s it now?” I asked. Were we getting a new car or magazine subscription, or were we remortgaging the house?

“It’s your antlerless deer license application. Sign here and here.”

I did and he pushed another piece of paper in front of me.

“Sign this, too. It’s your second antlerless permit application. I’ll fill in the county after I find out where there are licenses left.”

I added a bit of a flourish at the end of the final “r” in my last name and put the pen down.

“Wait a minute, you’ve got more,” he said. “This is your application to goose hunt at Pymatuning.”

“Any more?”

“Not for you. I’ve got to fill out my application for bobcat,” he said.

That was one permit application I didn’t have to sign this year. I had been drawn for a bobcat hunting/trapping license last year and, by law, couldn’t reapply this year. I had already sent in our applications for the elk hunt drawing online, so I didn’t need signatures on that. If we were lucky enough to be drawn, I imagine we would be signing things again.



Bob Steiner

APPLYING for an elk license is permission to dream about the possible hunt to come.

I was doing a lot of imagining as I was signing those applications. I was fantasizing about the possible hunts-to-come.

I buy Pennsylvania lottery tickets occasionally, but not as part of a serious strategy to “get rich quick.” When the jackpot gets to many millions, I make sure I purchase that all-important ticket: the first one. The millions of other hopefuls who also buy lottery tickets might not get much

value from their unsuccessfully drawn chance as I do. It allows me to dream.

For a whole day, until 7 p.m., when the lottery numbers are picked, I imagine what I would do with the money. Replace the 6-year-old Jeep; maybe even buy two. I'd take that elk hunting trip out West; fly-fish Alaska. I'd own a log lodge on a hundred acres in Potter County and another in Maine, and Colorado and, heck, one in Tennessee.

After I tired of buying for me, me, me, I'd give gifts to everyone I know and like. Pay for college for all my nieces and nephews, take them and their parents on a dream vacation, then give friends and relations things they want and need. A new couch, a new roof, a new rifle, waders that don't leak. For my brother-in-law I'd buy that bronze turkey hunter sculpture I saw in a gallery. It was only \$15,000.

Then the bubble bursts. The lottery balls pop out of the tubes and they're not my numbers, at least not enough to get me more than a free ticket for next time. Maybe some people go around the day after the drawing depressed they didn't win. I just figure I had a dollar's worth of fun in fantasy.

Buying my Pennsylvania hunting license this past summer was like that. With the hunting license, I know I have much more chance than the lottery gives me at being successful, unless I'm looking for the "big jackpot" of a world-record whitetail. Signing the hunting application was as important as buying that lottery ticket. No matter what may actually happen in hunting season, no deer, a doe or little buck, or that record-buster, I've bought my way into the game. I don't have to play if I don't want to, don't have to hunt everything the license entitles me to, but at least I've been given the official okay to do so, and that's what's important. Now I can fantasize.

I don't purposely envision what could come to pass in hunting season when I'm signing the application. The dreams just come.

"Sign here," the woman at the license window at the Game Commission office said to me. It was across the lime green "2001 PA Resident Adult Hunting License" sticker affixed to the light gold general hunting license back tag.

What might I do with these? Warm October days, with the red and yellow leaves overhead turned to "cathedral glass" by sunlight streaming through. The welcome weight of the .22 on my shoulder, a squirrel in my game pocket, and the prospect of another in a gray's "cat call" ahead of me. Or my path through November woods cut by turkey scratching, the uncovered earth still moist, and the turned-up leaves on the far side barely settled. My heartbeat in my throat, knowing the birds are just ahead, I feel I might break the flock at any moment. Or the white clouds of breath from the buck's open mouth, condensing in the cold December air, as he stops running to look back and gives me a shot.

"And sign here," I'm instructed. It's the light blue "2001 PA Resident Archery Hunting License," a narrow sticker placed at the top edge of my back tag. Memories and expectations mix. I see my best bow buck again, taking a last step that spread his front leg forward, opening the heart area. He's turning his head away, but keeping one eye toward me, the ears cocked back. The arrow is gone; he's crashing over brush, and then collapsing in sight. Will it happen again? I can see something similar in my fantasy, the deer coming to my antler clacks, nosing the broken branch above the scrape, the kisser button brushing my lips, and this time the buck having two big antlers instead of one.

"You're not done yet," the gal at the Game Commission cuts into my reverie. "Sign one more time."

Now it's a white square on the front of the back tag and I have to sign across the diagonal. It's my "2001 PA Resident Muzzleloader License." Will this year be my first flintlock deer? I came so close last fall,

when the ball took out a narrow, but solid, sapling I hadn't noticed. Now the blackpowder season for antlerless deer was going to be a week long. I could suspend my bowhunting for a few days to carry the flintlock.

I had been part of an October muzzleloader doe kill last year. I pushed the deer toward another of our group, who was paralleling me through the woods. I remembered the boom of the longrifle, the second shot after he had reloaded, the happy hunter standing over the deer, knife and license in hand, when I got there. This

year it might be me, kneeling in the damp, brown ferns to fill out the tag, the spicy scent of autumn earth rising around me and the biting, gunpowder sulfur smell of the last shot settling.

"You've got to sign your furtaker license, too," I was told. I picked up the pen again. I wrote "Linda Steiner" in black against the orange license strip on the bright yellow back tag. Here was a permit I had never used much, but a new year was coming.

Last year I had to buy a furtaker license to get a bobcat permit, and although I spent several days in a prime bobcat area, I saw neither tawny hide nor round paw print of the cats. The first days I hunted turned windy and dry, bad for the cats to hear the call. The last ones, in winter, the snow cover melted right before I made the trip and the promised tracks in those hollows were gone. It appeared the cats were, too.

I can't hunt bobcats this year, but with the furtaker back tag I can envision being settled into some of those same calling stations at night, for coyotes. I tried coyote hunting last year and the electronic caller's screams of dying rabbits and coyote pups in distress raised the hair on the back of my neck. The red-lensed light swept the field before me and I wondered what could



Bob D'Angelo

I WONDER how many hunters envision what could come to pass in a brand new season when they're signing their license application? The dreams just come, and each new year brings visions of warm October days and frosty November mornings.

sneak up in the blackness behind. Finishing my signature, I knew I wanted the excitement of seeing those glowing yellow eyes getting closer.

I also bought a 2001 PA Resident Migratory Game Bird License, to go with the permit for hunting the Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area that I had applied for. Pymatuning is closer to me than Middle Creek, the Game Commission's other controlled goose hunting area. I had been to Pymatuning to hunt once and saw hundreds of geese flying, but none close enough to shoot. Now I dreamed of the big honkers turning low and cupping their wings, webbed feet dangling and splayed for the landing, intent on dropping into our decoys. When I stopped at the post office to buy my federal "duck stamp," I'd have another chance to dream.

I didn't buy a bear license, so I haven't been entitled to fantasize about a shiny black coat emerging from the blackness of a rhododendron swamp, my crosshairs settling on the gleaming jet shoulder. I don't hunt bears here because New York's firearm deer season opens then, and I live near enough to the border that I always buy a license to hunt there. But that's another state, and other dreams. □

Not only is the weather in October delightful, but a bountiful food supply this month enables wildlife to fatten up before winter.

A Seedy Month

WHAT A WEALTH of wildlife food our forest produces in October. With so many mature oak trees, probably our most important crop is acorns. Early in the month, long before acorns fall off the trees, blue jays come from far and wide to pick them, their calls resounding through the forest as they shell and eat some of them immediately. They carry many more back to their territories in their expandable throats and esophagi. There they disgorge the acorns in a pile and, one at a time, cache them in the ground and cover them with plant debris, a process scientists call "scatter-hoarding."

In one study, blue jays traveled as far as five miles round-trip, "planting" acorns in old fields, vacant lots and fencerows. Although they eat many of their cached

acorns in winter and early spring, enough are left to germinate into tree seedlings. In essence, blue jays are avian "tree farmers," planting food for future wildlife generations.

Blue jays are not the only critters that grow new oak trees, although they may be the most prolific planters. In Virginia, in one autumn 50 blue jays carried and cached 150,000 acorns. Some scientists even credit blue jays with moving oak forests north from their southeastern United States refuges during the last Ice Age at the rate of 380 yards a year.

Gray and fox squirrels scatter-hoard only on their home ranges, so they don't move acorns as far as blue jays, but many of their forgotten acorns also germinate. Gray squirrels are especially dependent on acorns, and their populations rise and fall

according to acorn abundance.



Eastern chipmunks and white-footed mice are also acorn-dependent, but they store most of them in underground larders, usually too far below ground or too crowded in piles to germinate. In fact, researchers in a managed central Pennsylvania forest discovered that white-footed mice were responsible for eating and caching nearly two-thirds of the acorn crop.

Many other birds and mammals, such as bears and white-tailed deer, depend on acorns to build up their winter fat reserves. Luckily, we have trees from both the white oak group (white and chestnut oaks), whose acorns mature in one year, and the black oak group (northern red, scrub, black and scarlet oaks), whose acorns take two years to mature. Except for a couple years during the gypsy moth outbreak in the early '80s, when the oaks were too stressed to fruit, our wildlife can always depend on at least some acorns to see them through the winter.

Other acorn enthusiasts are raccoons and wild turkeys. One observer watched as one turkey ate 77 whole black oak acorns and another 35 whole red oak acorns. Other acorn-loving birds are white-breasted nuthatches, ruffed grouse and red-bellied woodpeckers. Last October I watched a red-bellied store two acorns in a hole in one of our yard black walnut trees.

Black walnuts, like acorns, beechnuts and hickory nuts, are fruits with a dry, hard exterior. Although acorns are relished by nearly 100 species of birds and mammals, the thick, hard shells of hickory nuts and black walnuts make them inaccessible to most animals except squirrels and chipmunks. Squirrels also scatter-hoard black walnuts in our yard, but they allow many others to remain where they fall.

Because of the walnuts, we rarely have

trouble with squirrels at our birdfeeders. Only in the six out of 30 winters when our black walnut crop failed did gray squirrels invade our feeders. For a short time last winter a layer of ice covered the walnuts, so the gray squirrels ate our birdseed until the ice melted. And then they, along with a visiting fox squirrel, resumed digging up and eating walnuts.

One February morning I watched 15 squirrels in the yard as they trooped back into the woods with their treasure. No matter how many walnuts cover our yard in the autumn, they are all gone by the following spring.

Hickory nuts are even more popular. We have so few hickory trees in our forest that squirrels consume the nuts on the spot before they are fully mature in late August and early September.

Should any be left, chipmunks, fox squirrels, wild turkeys and red-bellied woodpeckers also like them.

Beechnuts are another favorite wildlife food, but American beech trees do not produce a crop of the burr-encased, sweet, triangular-shaped nuts every year. When they do, deer, bears, raccoons, squirrels, chipmunks, ruffed grouse, turkeys, blue jays, tufted titmice and red-bellied woodpeckers eat them. Most of our mature beech trees grow beside the stream, and many drop their nuts on our access road, so our car smashes them. Like hickory nuts, they are so prized by wildlife that I usually find only the empty prickly burrs.

Forest trees also produce seeds packaged in fleshy fruit that are attractive to many animals. Nature's plan is for the animals to eat the fruit whole and defecate the seeds intact, so they can germinate into tree seedlings. In the case of black gum trees, the big, thick-walled seeds are too large for many songbirds to swallow, so they eat only

The production and dispersion of seeds occurs mostly from April until November, but October is usually the seediest of months.

the dark blue fruits, but bears, gray squirrels, raccoons, foxes and wild turkeys also like the fruit and no doubt “plant” the seeds, too.

Back in October 1998 our black gum trees — also called black tupelo, sour gum and pepperidge — produced a bumper crop of fruit. I spent many happy hours watching those “cafeterias” for migrating and resident birds. My list included cedar waxwings, northern flickers, American robins, scarlet tanagers, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, hermit thrushes, eastern bluebirds and red-bellied woodpeckers. Other observers have recorded brown thrashers, wood thrushes, European starlings, pileated woodpeckers and red-eyed vireos eating black gum fruits. Strangely enough, the sapsucker I watched made sap wells and ate both sap and fruit.

We are lucky to have a healthy population of flowering dogwoods in our forest. Their bright red fruit clusters are not only attractive but also favorite wildlife food. Ruffed grouse, turkeys, cardinals, bluebirds, robins, brown thrashers, all species of thrushes, red-eyed vireos and cedar waxwings, eat the fruits, but the seeds are favored by squirrels, chipmunks and white-footed mice.

Dogwood fruits, like those of our other abundant October wild fruit producers — wild grapes and Hercules’ club — are especially important because they hang on through late fall and winter, when permanent residents need food. I’ve written before of how popular the heavy clusters of black Hercules’ club berries are with robins and cedar waxwings. In the last couple autumns, flocks of migrating starlings have been competing with the robins and waxwings in the extensive grove of Hercules’ clubs in our 10-year-old clearcut. Lately, I’ve seen cardinals and once a fox sparrow eating them. Other sources mention

Swainson’s thrushes and wood thrushes. Mammals include red foxes, skunks and chipmunks and, as I discovered a couple years ago, bears.

More than 150 years ago New England naturalist Henry David Thoreau wrote in his notes “The Dispersion of Seeds” about birch seeds. “When this seed is most abundant, great flocks of lesser redpolls come down from the north to feed on it and are our prevailing winter bird. They alight on the birches and shake and rend the cones, then swarm on the snow beneath, busily

picking up the seed in copses. Though there may be but few birches, white or black, in the midst of a wood, these birds distinguish their tops from

afar . . . I also see the goldfinch . . . eating the birch seed in the same manner.” And the pine siskin, I might add.

Whenever we have a winter invasion of these northern seedeaters, I always spot them first among the birches. In the winters when there are no northern finches, black-capped chickadees and dark-eyed juncos harvest the seeds. Other observers report seeing ruffed grouse, fox sparrows and chipmunks eating them.

Birch seeds, unlike the other trees I’ve mentioned, are dispersed by wind and resemble, according to Thoreau, “tiny, brown butterflies.” He also counted 1,000 seeds packed in each cone or strobile. “Wind dispersal,” Peter Marchand writes in his excellent book *Autumn: A Season of Change*, “is a gambler’s approach,” and the least successful method of dispersal. That may be so, but we have many black birch trees that supply birdseed year after year.

Next to acorns, wild grapes probably provide the most food for wildlife in our forest. During the infestation of gypsy moth caterpillars, wild grapes kept many of our wild animals alive during the winter. The



Far Field thicker, then heavily laden with grapes, provided both food and cover for white-tailed deer. One winter they were so hungry that they ignored me as I sat in plain view and watched them slowly and painfully moving around in search of fallen grapes. Now that the oaks have recovered, wild grape thickets still provide great wild-life watching from fall until spring.

Flocks of robins, cedar waxwings and white-throated sparrows often winter among the grapevines, and ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, cardinals, fox sparrows, thrushes, pileated and red-bellied woodpeckers also eat the fruit. One autumn I watched 10 rusty blackbirds feeding on grapes, and long ago, when evening grosbeaks wintered here, they spent a lot of time eating grapes and their seeds.

Mammals that like grapes include bears, red and, especially, gray foxes, raccoons,

skunks, opossums and fox squirrels, among others. Eastern box turtles also consume wild grapes. Some researchers report that when wild grape seeds pass through the gut of the box turtle, their viability is actually enhanced, perhaps because the turtle's digestive juices help break down the hard exterior of the seeds. The seeds also may take several days to pass through the turtle, during which time the turtle may move several hundred feet, dispersing the seeds to new locations. So box turtles may be unintentional viticulturists.

The production and dispersion of seeds occurs mostly from April until November, but there is no doubt that in our forest, October is the seediest of months. "Convince me that you have a seed there," Thoreau wrote, "and I am prepared to expect wonders." If that is true, then our forest is truly a wonder. □

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Don't worry about whether Lady Luck smiles on you or not. Success in bowhunting occurs when planning meets opportunity.

Planning for the Shot

SUCCESSFUL BOWHUNTING is made up of two components: good luck and good planning. Good luck is something everyone hopes for, but it isn't something you can count on. Good planning, however, is entirely within your control, and the more you plan the less you will have to rely on luck.

In my opinion, the two most important keys to becoming consistently successful are attention to detail and planning. Bowhunting is far from a predictable activity, but by anticipating what may happen in any given situation and planning to deal with those circumstances, you can tip the odds in your favor.

Nowhere is planning more critical than when it comes to taking the shot. Not only is it important to be in the right place at the right time, it's even more important to be in the right position. Bowhunting is a game of close range, and any deer within bow range can pick up even the slightest movement. Having a big buck within bow range is meaningless if you're facing in the

wrong direction. That's why it's important to set up your treestand or ground blind in such a manner as to eliminate the need for any unnecessary movement should a shot present itself. This is best accomplished by planning ahead.

Sandy Kasun



YOUR TREESTAND should be placed in such a manner that the deer approach from the closed side of the "U" setup, and the shot is taken out of the open end of the U as the deer passes.

Most bowhunters select their stand locations based upon preseason scouting or knowledge of deer movement within a given area. In either case, after the general area for a stand has been determined, the next consideration before setting up the stand is where, specifically, you expect deer to come from, and where the best opportunity for a shot is likely to present itself. Although this may seem difficult, using some simple logic can narrow down the possibilities.

As an example, assume that I've decided to hunt between a bedding area and a stand of oaks where feeding activity has been taking place. I would scout the area between these two locations, looking for any funnels or other signs of concentrated travel. I normally avoid setting stands near heavily used trails through relatively open areas. Experience tells me that deer normally use these trails at night. Instead, I look for less conspicuous trails through thick cover. When hunting thick areas I check every apparent easy route through the thicket for signs of travel. I do not expect to find big trails, but rather small concentrations of sign. These clues tell me that the odds of a deer appearing in these locations are good.

If I intended to hunt this stand in late afternoon or evening, the most likely direction of travel of the deer would be from the bedding area towards the feeding area. While the normal tendency is to place the stand facing in the direction from where the deer may approach this could lead to several serious problems. First, the approaching deer will be looking directly at the stand location, making even the slightest movement instantly detectable. Second, any shot will be a frontal shot. Frontal shots offer a small target and require the arrow to penetrate the heavy grizzled brisket area. Even if such a shot is successful, the chances of an arrow passing through the length of the animal are remote, and the blood trail resulting from an entry wound in the brisket will be virtually zero,

even if the arrow reaches the heart/lung area. This is a no shot situation for a bowhunter, and for these two reasons a stand should never be set up facing the direction from which an animal is likely to approach.

The best angle for an arrow to reach the heart/lung area with the least resistance is a quartering shot from slightly behind the animal. This entry angle allows the arrow to slice through the rib cage behind the heavy shoulder blade and leg bone, angling forward into the chest. However, to get a shot from this angle means that the hunter has to be slightly behind the animal. If the hunter is facing the animal as it approaches he must allow the animal to pass and then turn around to shoot. This is unrealistic, as it involves too much movement.

The logical choice is to have the hunter facing slightly away, approximately 45 degrees, from the direction the animal will approach, and then allowing it to pass the stand for the optimum shot. A right-handed hunter should be on the right side of the anticipated travel route, and the opposite for a lefty. This places the animal on his left or his bow arm side. In order to make the shot he has only to lift his arm and draw the bow. By eliminating the need to turn or shift position within the stand, movement is reduced to a minimum, which greatly increases the odds of getting the shot off without detection.

I look for several trees close together when setting up my treestand. The ideal situation is if their limbs actually intertwine. I then attempt to place the stand so I'm hidden from deer approaching from the rear, and the adjacent trees provide me cover on the sides. Think of this set up as the letter "U" in which two or three trees form the U. By placing my stand in the middle of the U, I'm covered on three sides. Following the above logic, the stand should be placed in such a manner that the deer approach from the closed side of the U, and the shot is taken out of the open end as the deer passes.

I always draw the bow before the deer gets to the open part of the U. If I have chosen the site properly, the trees on either side provide the cover to hide the slight movement of the draw. When the deer steps into the open end I release my arrow.

Assume for a moment that a deer does not follow my plan and, instead of appearing in the open part of the U, passes behind my stand. Because it would be passing on the side where I have the greatest cover, I stand a good chance of being able to actually turn around and shoot out of the back side of the stand, between the trees forming the U; I've done it many times.

While a U-shaped group of trees is the most desirable set up, it's not always possible. My second choice is a "J" formation, again formed by several trees. In these cases I set up the stand to place the long side of the J between me and the deer and plan to take the shot as the deer passes the long leg of the J. Of course this J gets flipped right to left, depending if the shooter is right or left handed. The only problem in this situation is if the deer approaches my stand from the open side of the J, where I'm most exposed. In this case I simply remain motionless and wait for the deer to move into a better shooting position, or I simply pass up the shot.

All of my treestands are equipped with seats, and I remain seated at all times. It lowers my profile and is more comfortable than standing. Sitting allows me to avoid the movement caused by the periodic shifting of my weight that standing for long periods requires. I also shoot while seated, which again helps keep my total movement to an absolute minimum. When positioning my stand, I pay special attention to the area where I think the shot will present itself, and set the stand so I can hit that spot without pivoting my body.

A setup for a morning hunt would simply be reversed, as the deer would normally be heading from the feeding area towards

a bedding location. The morning stand, therefore, would face in the opposite direction.

Right about now I know that some of you are saying, "What is this guy thinking?" but think about the logic for a moment. When deer are on the move they are alert to everything around them, but their main focus is in front as they constantly check for danger. They stop, listen and smell, and they look side to side, but they seldom look back unless something unusual occurs or another deer is following.

Obviously this technique is based upon making a correct assumption as to where a deer is likely to be when it presents itself for a shot. In this regard there is no substitute for experience and scouting. Knowing where and how deer move through your hunting area during the different seasons and under different conditions is critical to making good decisions concerning the best hunting locations and stand placements. While it is impossible to always predict how deer move, an educated guess is better than no guess. My experience and success has shown me that it's better to be prepared for a possible shot and be wrong than to simply set up a stand and hope for the best.

Obviously, all the normal precautions concerning scent, wind direction and camouflage are as important with this method as with any other. In addition, I always make sure my treestand is set low enough to avoid being silhouetted against the skyline. Another important consideration is the position of the sun during the hours in which I will be in the stand. There is nothing worse than spending several hours in a stand only to have the sun directly in your eyes when a shot presents itself. A slight change in the angle of the stand usually will eliminate this problem.

Facing slightly away from the anticipated approach of deer took some getting used to, and although seemingly odd at first, looking over the shoulder soon be-

ever detecting us.

Some people wait all of their lives for their ship to come in, and when it does, they are at the airport. Plan ahead for that shot of a lifetime every time you go afield and when opportunity knocks, you'll be ready. □

There's much more to a scattergun than its gauge or type of action. How well it fits the hunter determines how well he or she will do in the field.

The Hunter's Shotgun

WHAT SHOTGUN are you using?" my hunting partner asked. "It looks like some relic from the French and Indian War. I never thought I'd see you carrying a battered blunderbuss like that."

"Yeah, I have to admit, the old Central Arms 12-gauge isn't much to look at, but I can sure hit grouse with it."

"You should consider yourself lucky if it even goes off. After you get tired of miss-

ing, I may let you use my new over/under that I had custom made for me."

"I appreciate your generosity, but this vintage 12-gauge and I have traveled many miles. It's my favorite rabbit and grouse outfit, and I doubt your new custom gun would be suitable for my frame," I said.

A few minutes later I heard two shots, and because my hunting partner was a legendary shot, I assumed one bird was down if not two. To my surprise, however, he had missed both shots. I can't remember his excuse, but I knew he was being honest and not just making up a wild tale, so I didn't needle him.

As we pushed deeper into the thicket, a grouse thundered out, swinging to my left. My 12-gauge double dropped the grouse, and a half hour later I stuffed a second bird into my coat. My friend picked up the scarred and worn Central Arms and studied it.

"You're not thinking of buying it are you?" I quipped. "I might accept your shotgun and a couple hundred dollars extra if you're really interested."

DON LEWIS has had good success over the years with an Ithaca SKB 20-gauge with 25-inch barrels, both bored improved cylinder. It works well in dense cover and fits Lewis perfectly.

Helen Lewis



"For that relic I wouldn't give you the empty shells from my gun," he said sarcastically. "One of these days that thing's gonna fall apart, and you can write that in stone."

Well, I have to admit, the old Central Arms did finally bite the dust. I used it for another season or two after that hunt, but it eventually succumbed to wear. When it dropped the firing pins after I snapped it shut while cleaning the barrels, I knew it was time to retire that shotgun. I wasn't happy, though, because that Central Arms fit me perfectly, and it had accounted for more kills per shell fired than any shotgun I had ever hunted with.

Many hunters are engrossed in gauge or type of action. I won't condemn this thinking, but there's more to a shotgun than its gauge or action. Around 1935 (during the Depression), one of my older brothers borrowed a friend's single-shot 12-gauge. The entire family made fun of the old firearm and kidded my brother about carrying a shotgun that was made from a piece of pipe and a fence rail. If looks meant anything, the 12-gauge was hopeless. But that particular shotgun and my brother were a perfect match.

My brother was not the best small game shot in the family. He was constantly being ribbed about shooting where the game wasn't. Things changed dramatically, though, with the single-shot. He not only scored consistently on rabbits, he shot better than his brothers and all his hunting buddies in the grouse woods. Although my brother tried repeatedly to buy the old gun, his friend, who had quit hunting years before, wouldn't sell it and eventually asked for it back. Without his "lucky" single-shot, my brother was back to square one, and chances were good that he wouldn't have a shotgun for the coming season. He was so disgusted over the single-shot situation that he vowed he would never borrow another gun.

It was a sheer stroke of luck that a local hardware store had a Remington 31. The

pump was a beauty to behold. With its high grade, well grained and checkered stock and forend, it might have been a 31 Special Grade. To make a long story short, the family — and I do mean the entire family — scraped up the \$45 to purchase the gun for my brother. Naturally, he was flabbergasted and spent most of the winter showing off his new gun.

There's no question the Model 31 was a beauty and a superb field gun, but there was one annoying feature: the 14-inch stock was too long for my brother. To make matters worse, at eight pounds, the pump was considerably heavier than the single-shot and didn't have the same balance. As the seasons rolled by, it became obvious the sleek Model 31 was not the right shotgun for my brother. Many people suggested that he have the stock shortened, but he was totally against any type of modification. The factory wouldn't have put a 14-inch stock on the shotgun if it wasn't the correct length, he argued. Removing an inch or so of stock could have enhanced his success in the field, but we'll never know because the Model 31 was eventually stolen.

I often think of the many small game hunters who blame their lack of success on poor shooting. And while that's probably the reason for many missed shots, I'm sure there are many instances in which the shotgun could be blamed. I won't go into detail about shotgun fit in this column, except to say that shotgun shooting is different from rifle shooting. Rifles are equipped with some type of sighting device to enable the shooter to place the bullet in a predetermined spot on the target. A shotgun, on the other hand, throws a charge of hundreds of pellets that keeps expanding in diameter (called pattern) as it moves away from the muzzle. The choke constriction in the muzzle of the barrel controls how fast the diameter of the shot charge enlarges as it moves through the air.

For a quick comparison, a shot charge through a full choke is roughly 20 inches

in diameter at 20 yards and expands to only 45 inches at 40 yards. A modified choke produces a 25-inch pattern at 20 yards and more than 50 inches at 40 yards. Cylinder boring increases the pattern diameter to 40 inches at 20 yards and 60 inches at 30 yards. In theory, the percentage of shot that stays within a 30-inch circle at 40 yards is: full choke, 65-75 percent; modified, 55-65 percent; improved cylinder, 45-55 percent; and cylinder, 35-45 percent.

I'm not a strong believer in the percentage system, although I would be foolish to criticize it. I think the total diameter of the pattern makes more sense. I'm well aware that the density of a pattern is of the utmost importance, because a hunter has to depend on pattern density to strike the target with enough pellets to kill. Some experts claim it takes five pellets or more to assure a quick kill. That's pure speculation, because it depends on where the pellets strike. One time I dropped a ringneck with what I thought was a well-centered pattern. To my amazement, only one pellet (and I looked at the skinned bird from head to tail) struck the bird. A single pellet in the head was just as effective as five or more pellets in the body. I don't bank on the single-pellet theory, but I do give a lot of thought to the diameter of the pattern at the field ranges I shoot.

The 30-inch circle 40-yard theory unquestionably shows the patterning ability of a barrel, but I believe a small game hunter should be more concerned with the diameter of his pattern at various ranges. During a 4-year period several of my hunting friends and I carefully stepped off the distance we shot rabbits and grouse. While our ranges were not exact, our results showed that most animals were taken at 20 to 25 yards.

Although many small game hunters prefer modified or full choke, I'm convinced that improved cylinder has distinct advantages. From tests I've conducted, an improved cylinder choke offers a pattern diameter of around four feet at 30 yards,

which would be around 42 inches at 25 yards. Compared to a 25-inch pattern at 25 yards from a full choke, it's obvious why the improved cylinder boring will enhance a hunter's success.

The main argument I get about improved cylinder choke is that the pattern is too thin at 30 yards. My previous figures show that the IC boring can put 45 to 55 percent of the total shot charge in a 30-inch circle at 40 yards. If that's the case, you can bet your best hunting boots that the IC will have sufficient shot in its pattern at 20 to 25 yards. I'm a strong advocate of small shot, and I've successfully used trap loads with number 8 shot in the IC barrel of my over/under double and number 7½ shot in the modified barrel for all types of field shooting.

During my younger days, local hunters favored full choke, long barrel shotguns, due to the mistaken belief that such an outfit delivered more velocity and hit harder than one with short barrels with more open chokes. Truth is, all gauges have similar velocities, but the bigger gauges have larger shot charges (in pellet count) than small gauges. The more pellets that hit a target, the greater the chance for an instant kill. In that sense, a 12-gauge has an edge over a 20-gauge. This is a major consideration when distances stretch beyond 35 yards, but at normal field shooting distances on rabbits, woodcock, grouse and quail, the pattern usually has a good concentration of shot, and that's truer when small shot is used.

Patterning a shotgun is a must. I'm not talking about the conventional 40-yard pattern, either. Test your shotgun with several sizes of shot at 20 to 25 yards, because 85 percent of your shots in the field will be taken at 15 to 25 yards. Don't accept as pure truth the choke marking on the barrel, either. A half dozen shots at a patterning board might show that your modified choke is closer to full. The hunter who knows how his shotgun patterns will ultimately be more successful in the field. □

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

Hunters in New Hampshire took 10,859 deer in 2000, which was the third highest harvest in the past decade. The kill included 7,472 antlered and 3,387 antlerless deer. Bowhunters took 1,970; muzzleloader hunters, 2,797; and firearm hunters, 6,092.

Legislation to ban hunting with hounds (labeled a "fox-hunting ban") in England and Wales passed in the British House of Commons by 387 votes to 174. The measure must still be approved by the House of Lords, which is traditionally more conservative and in-tune with the British countryside.

A survey during the 1930s and '40s of winter-killed deer in the Adirondacks of New York revealed that doe mortality was higher than for bucks. The study also showed that 23 percent of the dead deer were older than seven years, 10 percent were between two and seven, 4 percent were yearlings and 63 percent were fawns.

An estimated 5,100 hunters harvested approximately 36,000 snow geese in North Dakota during the 2000 spring light goose season held March 1 through May 14. The average season bag was nearly seven geese per hunter. North Dakota held its first spring light goose season in 1999, with 6,300 hunters taking 25,000 birds. Special spring light goose seasons in the future are dependent on successful completion of an Environmental Impact Statement process by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Hunters had one of the safest years ever in New York in 2000 with 43 injuries, including four fatalities. Last year's total is down 17 percent from a previous low of 52 mishaps in 1994.

Bobwhite quail are one of the most imperiled game species in the continent. Across most of their range, bobwhites have declined by 70 to 90 percent since 1966, with an annual rate of decline of 4 to 6 percent in states across their core range. Widespread habitat degradation due to modern patterns and intensity of land use generally is accepted as the underlying cause of population declines.

Saying it did not want to open a "Pandora's box" for lawsuits against other industries, an Ohio appeals court has upheld a lower court judge's ruling, dismissing a suit by the city of Cincinnati that sought to recover millions of dollars from gun manufacturers. Cincinnati was among more than 30 other cities filing such suits.

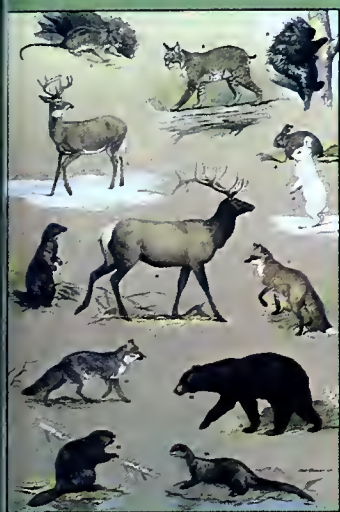
An attempt to make doves legal game in Michigan this year fell one vote short in the state senate.

The majority of sportsmen and women voted for George W. Bush (68 percent versus 15 percent for Al Gore). While the majority of hunters surveyed identified themselves as Republicans (46 percent), when it comes to choosing a candidate, hunters will vote their guns or sport before they vote their party.

Hunters in North Dakota took 283,759 pheasants in 2000 — up from 258,335 in 1999.

Answer: b, c, c, a, d, i, g, f, h

LOOK, POINT, SHOOT;
SMOOTHBORE; RIFLING.



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PA GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Give it a Try

WHEN I GOT MY FIRST DEER, 22 years ago, the “hunt” ended when the deer dropped. Since then, I’ve gotten my fair share of deer, but these days, in many respects, the hunt just begins when the deer goes down.

Over the years I’ve strived to learn how to butcher and process deer myself — and how to make the best venison meals I can. Last year, for instance, I not only ground my own venison for the first time, I even made my own sausage, and it was so delicious I can’t imagine ever again taking it somewhere else to have it made. (I used the recipe in Albert Wutsch’s “Cooking Bear,” beginning on page 31, substituting, of course, venison for bear.)

Learning how to butcher and process my own deer has greatly enhanced my hunting experience, and I think if you give butchering and processing a try, you’ll find it to be enjoyable and satisfying, too. It’s not nearly as difficult as it may seem, and you will save a fair amount of money.

A lot of handouts and books on butchering deer can be found, and deer butchering seminars are popular attractions at sports shows. But what got me to finally give butchering a try was a video. I used “Big Game Field to Table” (Wild Harvest Videos, 1-800-819-3799, www.wildharvestvideos.com), but I’m sure others are around that are just as useful. I watched it a couple times to get familiar with the process. Then, when it came time to start cutting, I simply watched a step and then stopped the tape and went out and did that step on the carcass.

Going step-by-step, back and forth between video and deer carcass, wrapping the various cuts along the way, was like having my own personal instructor right there, leading me through the process. Cutting up my first deer took around six hours or so, but I’ve gotten faster and better since that first attempt.

I take great care in cooling the carcass, aging the meat, keeping everything clean, having a sharp knife — I use an 8-inch filet knife for about everything — and having all other equipment readily on hand. I’m also meticulous about wrapping the cuts. To minimize freezer burn, I keep the cuts as large as possible and double-wrap them tightly in heavy duty plastic wrap. A couple years ago I started canning venison, and I’ve found this to be a great alternative to freezing, and the meat is outstanding.

In recent years deer processors have seemed to be swamped with business, at least partly because of the high deer harvests we’ve had. This year, though, with antlered and antlerless deer seasons opening on the same day, processors are sure to be busier than ever.

Deer hunting is more than just filling a tag. It begins on the shooting range and, perhaps, at the reloading bench, and culminates when serving a stroganoff, shoulder roast, a lasagna, or any other healthy and delicious meal. Processing your own deer adds greatly to the hunting experience, saves you money, and it’s really the only way of getting exactly the cuts you want. If you’ve ever thought about cutting up your own deer, don’t be afraid to give it a try. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

As president of Millbrook Gun Club, I wish to express our sincere thanks to the NRA Foundation for its monetary grant that enabled us to buy two Bushmaster match grade competition rifles through the civilian marksmanship program. These rifles are used in safety and marksmanship training for 4-H Jr. Rifle Team members, at YMCA ranges and for the general public/club members at clinics and matches.

Please, support Friends of the NRA events in your area; help the foundation continue to assist in its many firearms related public interest programs.

G. KIBLER
LOCK HAVEN

Editor:

I am renewing my subscription for the 25th year, and I want to let you know how I feel about a new format.

I feel *Game News* is unique, with only black-and-white photos and art, and no advertisements. I feel this sets it apart from other more commercial hunting magazines.

I would like *Game News* to stay just the way it is.

J. SNYDER
LANCASTER

You're not alone. This past spring we had an opinion survey conducted to see how subscribers — and nonsubscribers — feel about changing the format of Game News. The results indicated most people like Game News just the way it is.

This past summer, Pennsylvania's wild turkeys lost three of their best friends. Paul Hickes, a former Game Commissioner, died in an automobile accident. In August, retired conservation officer John Putnam and retired PGC biologist Arnie Hayden each passed away after extended illnesses.

When president of the board of commissioners, Paul was largely responsible for finally closing the turkey farm, which for years had impeded turkey restoration here. He also championed the regional management area concept that was adopted in the mid-1980s.

John Putnam, a former district officer in McKean County, was the first to offer assistance in trapping turkeys — which in 1960 was still an unpopular program among local hunters. He also helped with several research projects conducted in his district, especially the long-term study of winter mortality on turkeys. Later, when John was promoted, he volunteered in 1970 to take on the extra work of turning a withering turkey trapping effort into a successful restoration program.

Arnie Hayden, who worked on wild turkeys for his MS degree at Penn State, was hired in 1961 as a biologist on the Game Commission's turkey research project. Arnie worked on various studies, mainly those relating to behavior, populations, winter survival and habitat preferences. Even after Arnie was promoted to head the furbearer project, he still made time to complete studies he had started on turkeys — his first love.

Pennsylvania turkey hunters can be grateful for the dedication of these men. They will be greatly missed.

JERRY WUNZ
RETIRED PGC BIOLOGIST
MILROY

Watch for results of this survey in a future issue.

Editor:

I'm 65 and have hunted since I was 12. I was born in Pennsylvania but now live in Ohio, and I feel nonresidents did not get a fair chance at the antlerless deer licenses.

In the county where I

wanted to hunt, only 445 antlerless licenses were left by the time nonresidents could apply.

I think there should be a better way of distributing these licenses, so nonresidents have a better chance of getting them.

D. ESHELMAN
WILLOUGHBY, OH

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.

Chase One Find Two

By Thomas R. Lockhart

THE CALENDAR had finally wound down to "My Time." The big game seasons in my home state of Pennsylvania were about to begin. The months of dreaming, planning and waiting were over.

This year's hunting season promised to be extra special for a couple reasons. One was that our first trip to the mountains would be to hunt black bear. This would be my first bear hunt. The other reason was that this would be the last big game season before my brother-in-law and closest hunting buddy, Mark Maygar, would be leaving for a 4-year hitch in the Marine Corps. Considering this, we would be taking more time to hunt than ever before.

Plans called for Mark and me to drive to my family's camp in Forest County, nestled along the Allegheny River. Saturday would be spent squirrel hunting and scouting an area where we had seen bear sign the year before, in doe season, and then just six weeks ago while archery hunting. We would be joined Sunday by my father, Roy Lockhart, who would be my partner on Monday's bear hunt. Mark would be spending Monday feeding the camp's woodstove because he didn't get a bear tag.

As Mark and I loaded our supplies into the truck, I could feel the excitement building inside me that only comes from anticipating a big game hunt. Once we were on the road, the talk about last year's hunting and the

anticipation of this year's hunting seemed to close the gap of a year between big game seasons. By the time we got to camp, there was just enough time to prepare our gear for the next day's outing before hitting the sack.

Dawn found us standing at the beginning of two paths, one going up each side of the hollow where we hoped to find bear sign as well as some squirrels. I chose the left side, Mark the right. We wished each other luck and were off. Not five minutes passed before I heard Mark's first shot.

As I walked quietly up the trail, I couldn't help but think that this would be the last squirrel hunt Mark and I would share for at least four years, and how much I would miss his companionship.

When the trails met at the top of the hollow, Mark had bagged three squirrels and I had two. We hadn't seen any sign that a bear was still in the area. We split up once again, Mark went north along the mountaintop and I headed south. Almost immediately the wind started to blow hard and the squirrels disappeared from the treetops. When we met back at the truck, neither of us had shot another squirrel or seen any bear sign.

After a short nap and a hot dinner we decided to visit some local businesses to see if anybody had been seeing any bears. After visiting two stores and three diners, we had been told the same thing twice. The bears were on Kelly Hill. Armed with this knowledge that bears had been seen recently on the mountain directly above our camp, we returned to camp for a good night's sleep.

Sunday morning we woke to the sound



of footsteps on the front porch. Dad had arrived. We helped unload his gear and told him about our scouting trip and the information we had heard in town. Sunday was spent in camp, plinking at cans with a .22 and watching a football game on the tube. (Nobody ever said that hunting camp has to be four walls, a roof and a potbelly stove.)

Talking over dinner, we decided to take the locals' advice and hunt Kelly Hill in the morning. After dinner we prepared our gear, set our clocks for 4:30, and were in bed by 10. Sleep was tough to come by that night, between the reality of my first bear hunt in a few hours and the darndest feeling that we were going to get some action.

The alarm startled me before I realized that sleep had overtaken me somewhere in the night. As years of hunting had taught me, the first thing I did was

turn on the porch light, and I was surprised to find several inches of fresh snow. It was still coming down in large



heavy flakes. The thermometer on the porch read somewhere in the low 20s.

While we ate breakfast and dressed for the day's hunt, I couldn't shake the feeling that this was going to be an exciting day. As we drove up Kelly Hill Road, we noticed that the wind was blowing from the north, so when we walked in, we went to the north to keep our scent behind us. We headed for a large dish-like spot on the top of the mountain, several hundred yards across and just deep enough to allow a large field of view from the rim.

As I cleared snow from the top of a large rock in the pre-dawn darkness, the snow pelted my face, causing me to turn up my collar and tilt my hat down over my face to await dawn.

When daylight finally arrived, the snow and wind were still coming, but I knew that if I wanted a bear I would have to tip back my hat and keep my eyes open. I couldn't believe my eyes, there was virtually a hunter behind every tree for as far as I could see in any direction. If a bear came through that dish, it would sound like a war.

Not sure what to do next, I decided to wait for my dad to make the move. About 8:30 he came to my stand to get me. After a brief discussion, we decided to go to the area that we had originally planned to hunt.

While driving to the other area, we put together an impromptu plan. I would go up the right side of the hollow and he would go up the left side. If one of us hit a track, he would follow it. Otherwise, we would meet at the top of a small clearing where our trails would cross. When we got there, there was only one other truck parked in the cleared spot beside the road. We figured that we had gotten away from the orange army.

The snow had stopped and the sun was shining. As I worked my way up the hollow under the cover of the giant hemlocks, I sensed that feeling again, a feeling that had been missing when we were up on Kelly Hill. When we met at the top of the clear-

ing, neither of us had seen a hunter or a track, so we separated again to follow the ridge in opposite directions.

I had walked less than 50 yards from where we had parted when I saw them: bear tracks. I bent down to check them closer. The tracks were frozen hard. I figured they were at least a couple hours old. Just as I was standing up I heard a stick break behind me. I froze, half stooping and half standing, my heart thumping like a jackhammer. Ever so slowly I slid the sling off my shoulder, held my rifle at the ready, my finger poised over the safety. Slowly, without turning my body, I turned my head. It was a hunter. I shivered a little as the adrenaline rush faded from my body and the man approached me.

It turned out that he had been following the tracks I had just found since 7:30 in the morning, and that he had had enough and was turning back. I told him that it was nice to have met him and that I would give it a try from there. He left and I took up the trail.

It was a little past noon, and with the tracks being at least two hours old, I would have to move fast if I was going to catch up with that bear. I moved as fast as I could without tripping over logs and rocks, trying to watch for the bear and stay on the tracks at the same time. The mountaintop was mostly open hardwood forest but was interspersed with acre-sized stands of hemlock and pine, under which it was just dark enough to make me think that every large stump was a bear.

The bear was in no hurry. The tracks meandered all over the mountaintop. There were places where it had climbed up on large rocks, walked back and forth on logs, and places where it had just rolled around in the snow. Then I came to a place that really stumped me. The bear had walked circles around a small hemlock tree. The tracks led away from the tree, then within 50 yards, they turned back to the tree. There must have been at least a dozen sets of tracks leading away from and to that

tree. It probably cost me 20 minutes to sort out the jumble of tracks. It also let me catch my breath and wipe the sweat from my face. When I finally had the track worked out, it was 2 o'clock. Time was running out.

The trail ran along the bottom of a rock cliff for a couple hundred yards, then came to a deadfall that lay from the bottom of the cliff to the top. The bear had used the deadfall for a ladder. I told myself, if he could do it, so could I. I climbed the deadfall, grabbing branches where I could and shinnying the rest. When I got to the top, I found a still warm spot where the bear had bedded down. The tracks went along the cliff for about 50 feet, then turned straight down the cliff. He had caught me.

Back to the deadfall and down I went. Then back to where the tracks had gone down the cliff. The bear was running now. The tracks were close sets of four tracks with three-foot gaps between sets. They headed straight down the mountain.

I had been told that the reason dogs could catch and bay a bear was that sometimes the bear would pick a vantage point and wait to see what was chasing it. That seemed to be my only chance now, so I quickly headed off down that mountain.

I noticed that the bear was running down the more gradual parts of the hill and rolling down the steep parts. I could see him in my mind, rolling down that hill.

When I got to the bottom of the mountain, the tracks ran straight into a creek four or five yards wide and full almost to the top of its banks. I could see the tracks going out the other side, but wearing 10-inch pacs, I didn't dare wade it.

I ran downstream along the creek until I found what I was looking for: a log to cross on. Once across, I ran back

up to the tracks coming out of the creek. Was I surprised. There were two sets of tracks coming out of the creek and the new set was noticeably larger than the ones I had been following.

The tracks ran side by side straight up the mountain, but there wouldn't be any running up this hill. It went up in steep tiers with narrow ledges between them. Using an old deer hunting tactic, I climbed up the first steep section, staying low to the ground so that I couldn't be seen from above the first ledge. When I got just below the first ledge, I got behind a large tree and stood up to peek over the ledge. Nothing there, so I continued up to the second ledge and peeked over. There they were, behind a large deadfall a hundred yards up the hill.

I could see the back end of one bear sticking out past the right end of the deadfall, and just the head of the other one over the middle of the trunk. That one was staring right at me.

I pulled my head back behind the tree I was using for cover, unslung my rifle, slipped the safety off and cranked the scope up to nine power.

My heart was racing and I was

winded from the long chase. In one motion, I stepped to the right of the tree and brought up my gun. They hadn't moved. My only shot would be at the head of the one that was watching me. I tried to set the crosshairs between the eyes, but I was shaking too much and my hard breathing was starting to fog the scope. This is your only chance, I told myself. I took one deep breath, slowly brought the crosshairs down between the eyes and squeezed.

At the shot, the other bear ran off up the hill, but the one I shot at just stood up on its hind legs. I chambered another round, set the crosshairs on the middle of the chest and fired. The bear fell forward over the log and rolled about 10 yards, then was right back on its feet and coming almost straight at me. The bawling and teeth popping was the most ferocious sound I had ever heard. I chambered another round. With the bear only 25 yards away and the crosshairs behind the shoulder, I fired. This time the bear tumbled and was still.

I chambered another round and waited. After a few minutes, I felt a little more composed and the bear seemed to be dead. I unloaded my gun and walked over to it. I stood there and just admired it for a minute. The bear was a beautiful female with thick,



pure black fur. I felt a tear roll down my cheek. To this day I can't decide if it was a tear of joy or a tear for the bear. My senses suddenly caught up with me, and I realized that it would soon be dark. I quickly tagged and field-dressed the bear and hitched my drag rope to it. I may as well have hitched that rope to a tree. I couldn't drag the bear, but I could roll it. I rolled it to the bottom of the hill by the creek and marked the spot by hanging an orange glove on a branch.

I figured that if I went back the way I had come it would be midnight before I got out of the woods. I was pretty sure that the creek I was at came out to a road with camps along it a couple miles away. I started walking along the creek, the first mile briskly, the second mile on rubber legs. As I had figured, the creek came out to the road. It was almost completely dark, and I couldn't walk any farther. I knocked on the door of the first camp I came to with a car in the driveway. An elderly gentleman answered, and after I explained my situation he told me he would be glad to drive me the last three miles to where my truck was parked.

When the gentleman dropped me off at my truck, he congratulated me and I thanked him. When I turned around, there were three men standing by my truck. One man said, "Is this your truck, buddy?"

"Yes, why?"

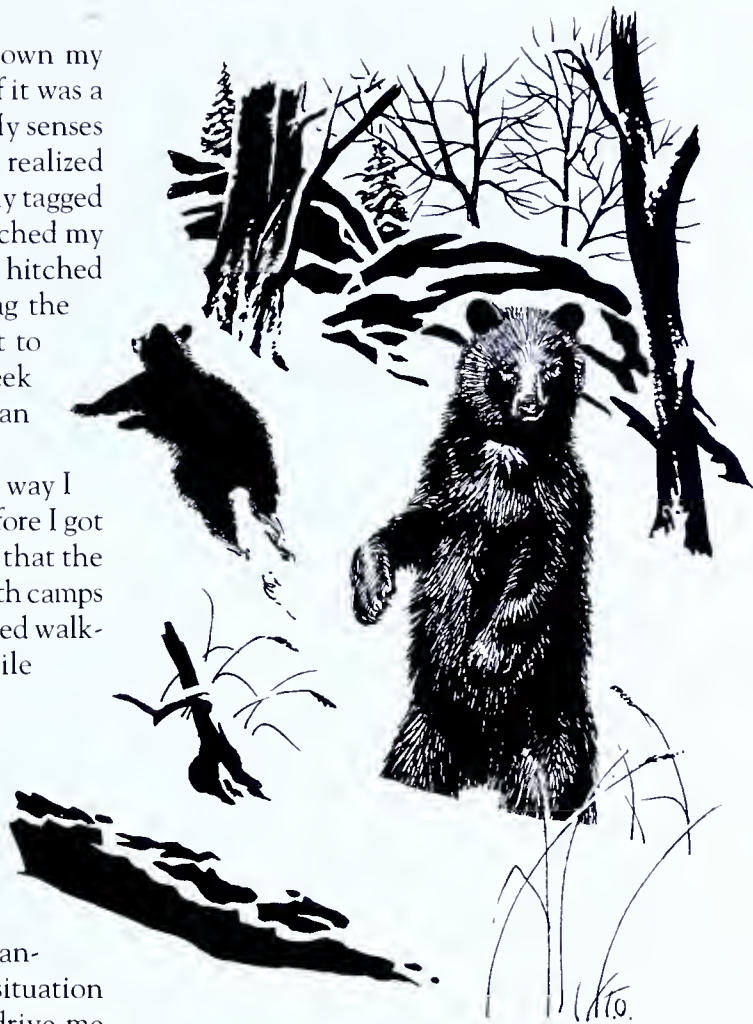
"We were just waiting to see if your dad was going to need some help finding you. He walked over to look up the hollow to see if you were coming out."

About that time my dad walked out of the woods. We thanked the men for waiting and for offering to look for me. They hopped in their truck and pulled out.

I turned to my dad and said, "Pop, I got a bear."

He stood there with a blank look for a second and then said, "You saw a bear?"

"I got a bear, Pop"



"You got a shot at a bear?"

"Pop, I got a bear. It's back in the woods. We have to go drag it out."

When it finally sank in, he hugged me, shook my hand and congratulated me.

Back in the truck I gave Pop a brief rundown of what had happened. And as I sat there, my body began to shake and Pop's common sense took over. "Are you sure you can find the spot where you left the bear?" I told him about the glove in the branch by the creek, and that I was sure I could find it.

"Good," Dad said. "It's not going anywhere. We have to get you back to camp and settled down."

He was right. When we got back to camp, he had to help me from the truck.

My legs were shaking and had no strength left in them.

While I slept, Mark and Pop took care of my gear and made a two-handled drag rope and put it and flashlights in the truck. After a couple hours, they woke me and we went into town for dinner.

With a couple hours' sleep and a hot meal I felt better, so we drove back to where I had come out of the woods. I led them back to the bear. Mark and Pop did all the dragging, and it wasn't until after midnight that we loaded the bear into the truck. There were three exhausted hunters falling into the sack that night.

Pop roused us out of the sack early the next morning, and he had a hot breakfast already on the table. After we ate and dressed, we unloaded the

bear, hung it from our deer hoist behind the camp, gave it a good cleaning and then took photos.

Close inspection revealed that my first shot had hit it right between the ears, just shy of missing high. She must have been dead on her feet. The second shot was low in the chest and the third hit behind the shoulder. My Remington 760 .30-06 and the 180-grain Core-Lokt bullets did the job.

After the photo session, we loaded the bear back onto the vehicle and headed for the nearest bear check station.

It was several days before I settled down enough to realize what I had done. I had gotten my first bear on my first bear hunt, and I had gotten it by using nothing but hunting skills and pure determination. That was probably the most physically exhausting day of my life, but I sure would like to do it again. □

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*"The mountains have always been here,
and in them, the bears."*

-- Rick Bass

Bears on the Rise

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, bears could be found all over Pennsylvania. By the middle of the 20th century, however, because of habitat loss and — when the general attitude was that the only good bear was a dead bear — indiscriminate killing, bears were virtually wiped out from all but the large oak forests of the northcentral region and the glaciated bogs of the northeast Poconos.

Today, most bears are found in the heavily forested southwest, northcentral and northeast regions, but many also inhabit the more rural and agricultural areas of the northwest, southeast and southcentral parts of the state.

In just the past 25 years, bear numbers have increased dramatically. In 1976, only 3,000 were believed to be living in Pennsylvania, but by 2000, the population was estimated at close to 15,000 — an almost three-fold increase. To no one's surprise, the 2000 hunting season brought in a record 3,075 bears.

Several reasons account for this increase. Many areas cleared for agriculture shortly after European settlement have reverted to second-growth forests, which provide the habitat and food bears thrive on.

Another reason the population has grown is the Game Commission's trap-and-transfer effort. In the 1980s, bears were returned to parts of the state where they were extirpated. There they prospered under progressively restrictive hunting regulations, including tempo-

rarily closing the season in areas where they had been released. However, the greatest factor was reducing hunting pressure by progressively shortening seasons and, in 1981, creating a bear license. This reduced the number of bear hunters by approximately half.

Stepping Back

In 1905, Pennsylvania became the first state to protect black bears. The first open season, when bear hunting was allowed only from October 1 to March 1, was held in 1905. In 1909, the season was limited to October 1 through January 1, and since then, has fluctuated between two months and no season at all, to the present three-day season that has been in effect since 1986.

From 1905 until 1981 (in years there was a season), anyone possessing a general hunting license was allowed to hunt bear. By the 1980s, bear hunters numbered more than 200,000. In 1981, to control hunting pressure, the legislature instituted a bear license, which allowed the Game Commission to regulate the number of bear hunters.

Applications for licenses were sent to the Game Commission headquarters in Harrisburg, and the first year, more than 72,500 hunters applied and received one. Starting in 1988, licenses could be purchased at



TO DETERMINE age, a tooth is pulled from each bear brought into a check station during hunting season.

the six region offices and the Harrisburg headquarters, and approximately 90,000 licenses were sold each year until 1996. In 1997, licenses became available at more than 1,000 locations across Pennsylvania, and sales increased to 102,000 per year — 10 percent more than were sold before they became so widely available, but still well below the number of bear hunters afield prior to the license being created.

Limiting hunting pressure has undoubtedly allowed the population to grow and, in turn, contributed to our recent record harvests. Other evidence also supports the estimates of population increases. For example, the number of bears killed on the highway has increased from 152 in 1986 to 301 in 2000. Finally, bear sighting and conflicts are becoming more common, too.

Today, our goal is to annually harvest 20 percent of the population. Because much of Pennsylvania's forests are privately owned, limiting the area where bears can further expand without conflict, this harvest rate is intended to stabilize the population. We measure harvest rates by monitoring the percentage of tagged bears taken each year. However, through our population monitoring efforts, we are beginning to learn that 20 percent harvests may not be sufficient.

Today, lots of people are working hard to determine how many bears are in Pennsylvania. Each year, 400 to 500 bears are captured, tagged and released throughout the state by wildlife conservation officers and technicians, in a concentrated effort to get a representative sample of tagged bears throughout the bear range. Some are nuisance bears that are trapped and relocated to less populated areas. By comparing the percentage of tagged bears harvested with the total number of bears taken, an estimate of the total population is calculated.

Every hunter who kills a bear is required to take it to a Game Commission check station within 24 hours. This provides biologists with information such as the age, sex and weight of bears being harvested. These stations are manned from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. all three days of the season, which runs Monday through Wednesday the week of Thanksgiving. Hundreds of people help with the check stations by weighing the bears, pulling a tooth from each, and recording hunter information.

To keep tabs on bear reproductive rates, we periodically check hibernating females for cubs. There are currently between 10 and 15 female bears throughout the state wearing radio collars. Each year, in late-win-

PGC biologist MARK TERNENT weighs a cub during a den visit in March 2000. This cub was tagged through both ears, and if the bear is ever captured again or harvested, biologists will be able to refer to the data collected when the bear was only two months old.



ter, these bears are tracked using telemetry to locate their dens, where the female is then tranquilized, checked and returned to the den. These visits accomplish several things. Most importantly, they allow biologists to check on reproduction. In the den with the female are her cubs — one to five, with an average of three — that are born in the den in January. The cubs are weighed, examined and tagged. This helps to bolster the

number of tagged bears, and can be referred to if the bear is ever recaptured. The mother is also weighed and examined for mange



MARK TERNENT adjusts a radio collar so that it fits the female bear as she grows this year.

and other health concerns, and her radio collar is adjusted to fit. WCOs locate the bears and biologists perform the examinations. Also, several people are needed to sedate the bear, lift her from the den, pick her up to weigh her and place her back in the den.

From tagging nuisance bears, to pulling teeth from harvested ones, to weighing two-month old cubs, hundreds of people are working hard to keep an eye on Pennsylvania's

growing bear population and use this information to guide management decisions. □

Oldest known black bear dies

THE REMAINS of the state's oldest known black bear were found this past September in the wilds of Pike County. Based on the ear-tag, the bear was identified as a 30-year-old female. After receiving word from those who found the remains, WCO Bob Buss located the carcass and determined the bear died of natural causes. Although it had badly broken and infected canine teeth, it did not appear to be malnourished.

"First tagged and radio-collared in June of 1985, this bear seems to have lived its entire life in the Pike County area, eluding hunters and vehicles for three decades," PGC biologist Mark Ternent said. "At that time, a tooth was extracted for aging, and it was determined that this bear was born in 1971.

"Between 1986 and 1989, agency personnel visited this bear's den to record reproductive success and perform maintenance to its radio-collar. The last contact the agency had with this bear was in 1994."

Ternent noted that this particular bear was part of the agency's orphaned-cub reintroduction program in 1988, in which orphaned cubs were introduced to other female bears with cubs.

"While there are documented cases of bears in other states living as long if not longer, this particular bear is the oldest bear we have confirmed living in the wilds of Pennsylvania," Ternent said.



Luck of the Fox

By Dave Dufford

A SOUND from behind caught my attention, and when I turned I spotted the squirrel through an opening in the bright yellow leaves near the top of a tree. It took me a moment to get turned around to take aim, but at the shot from my 581 Remington .22 the squirrel fell through the branches and hit the ground. It was a good clean head shot.

My father gave me the 581 for my 15th birthday, and it has been my favorite squirrel gun for nearly 30 years. I wish I knew how many squirrels I've taken with it during that time. This opening day fox squirrel was by no means the best or longest shot I've made with the 581, but it was the first I'd

taken with the aid of a scope. I had always done well enough with open sights, but the addition of a scope was a long overdue move.

In all my years shooting with open sights I had never noticed much difference in accuracy between one type of ammo and the next, but the addition of a scope, and a few sessions at a target range, taught me otherwise.

Don Lewis has often written that a rimfire should be tested with various types of ammunition, as one will most likely be more accurate than the others. It didn't surprise me to find that Don was right, but it wasn't until I installed a scope on my rifle that I knew how right he was. It took only a few target sessions to learn that some of the

ammo I had often used printed 5-shot groups at 50 yards that measured two inches across. I kept experimenting and eventually found a brand that consistently gave groups I could cover with a penny. At that point I knew I was really ready for squirrel season.

A few days after shooting that fox squirrel I found myself with a whole day to spend in the squirrel woods. Shooting hours had just begun when I entered the woods near my home, and I spooked a gray squirrel up a tree right away. I sat down to wait it out, but 45 minutes later I had a pretty good hunch the squirrel had skipped out on me, so I decided to move.

The area I moved to was better suited to shotgunning than to rifle hunting. Most of the hilltop had been logged a few years earlier. The squirrels were still there, but finding an opening for a rifle shot through the thick new growth was now mostly a matter of luck. My luck began when I caught two grays on the ground in one of the small openings. When one of them stopped about 35 yards away, I leaned against the side of a tree to help steady my aim, quartered its head with the crosshairs and squeezed the trigger.

Another good head shot, but the sound of the .22 sent the second squirrel up a large tree 20 yards away. As I walked over to pick up my first bushytail of the day, I kept close watch on the tree. The second squirrel didn't take off through the treetops, so I knew it was hugging a branch somewhere on the same tree it had gone up. I circled the bottom of the tree five or six times before I saw its head sticking over the side of a branch near the top. It was watching my every move. The shot was straight up, and I saw I had scored again as the squirrel slid from the far side of the branch only to become wedged in the fork of another branch halfway down the tree. I spent 15 minutes sitting on a nearby stump, watching for other squirrels and hoping I wouldn't have to climb the tree, before squirrel number two finished its fall to the ground.

I started toward home right after that and

saw two more squirrels but couldn't get a shot at either because of the thick cover. After a quick lunch at the house I was off to try my luck at a nearby farm. After stopping to ask permission, I started into the corner of a large woodlot where it bordered two fields. Having hunted there before, I knew I'd see squirrels if I just worked my way through the woods, staying close to the edge of the larger field.

It had rained through the night, so the conditions were ideal for still-hunting. A small section of these woods is a fenced pasture, and I spotted the first squirrel as the fence came into sight. It was a long shot, but the woods were too open to risk trying to get any closer. I could see that the squirrel was already looking my way and starting to scold.

One of the best squirrel hunting aids I have ever found is a padded seat that buckles on around the waist. I can shoot a lot better from a sitting position than I can standing, and with the seat already in place I can sit down anywhere, even when the ground is wet. I sat down slowly, hoping not to spook the squirrel, and I made up my mind that I would try a head shot or nothing.

When I first saw the big fox squirrel it was sitting on the lowest branch of a large oak, right at the edge of the field. Even if I'd have been close enough for a shot, it wouldn't have been safe because I would have been shooting over a hilltop. A miss, or maybe even a hit, and the solid point bullet could easily travel over the hill and then down toward some houses. Having no intentions of taking such a risk, I waited and hoped the squirrel would come down the tree and offer a shot I could try.

It was worth the wait. The squirrel soon climbed down and stopped on the ground, centered perfectly at the base of the big oak. It even sat still long

enough for me to take a long, careful aim.

I wish now that I would have taken the time to step off the range, but when I saw that the squirrel was hit I jumped up and hurried over to it. There was no need to, though. Another head shot. I figure the range to have been around 70 yards. I was zeroed in at 50 yards and had aimed an inch and a half above the head. I'll be the first to admit that luck came into play, but with all my pre-season target work, including shots out to 100 yards, I had a good idea of what bullet drop to expect.

With my third squirrel in the bag, I continued still-hunting across the pasture. The next squirrel I heard before I saw it. I had just stepped beyond the far fence when I heard chattering from a tree overhead. Expecting another fox squirrel, I was surprised to see a gray looking down at me. With only the head to aim at, I took my second straight-up shot of the day—and this one didn't get caught on any branches on its fall.

Not far beyond, the ground took a sudden steep drop into a wooded creek bottom, and another gray squirrel appeared from below the edge. It moved ahead of me along the ground and didn't offer a shot. It had no sooner moved out of sight when I saw a fox squirrel way out ahead of me, but I lost sight of it when it went over the edge of the hill toward the creek bottom. As soon as it had gone, a flicker of movement caught my attention less than 50 yards away.

There was a second gray squirrel sitting atop a log. I hadn't taken a step or made a move since the first squirrel had come into sight, and before I had time to react to the squirrel on the log



THE SECOND squirrel didn't take off through the treetops, so I knew it was hugging a branch somewhere on the same tree it had gone up.

I heard a sound on my right. It was another fox squirrel. It had come along on the ground from somewhere behind me and was no more than 10 yards away. It continued moving past and was about 25 yards ahead of me before it finally stopped and offered a shot. An offhand shot was my only chance, because I knew it would see me and be gone if I tried to sit down. When my shot connected on this one, I was every bit as pleased as I had been with the long shot I had just made.

The sound of my shot sent the gray squirrel off the log and out of sight below the edge of the hill. I picked up my fifth squirrel and carried it along as I moved on over for a view down into the creek bottom. The idea hadn't crossed my mind when I'd started out that morning, but with five already, I made up my mind that this was

going to be the first time I'd shoot a limit of squirrels with my 581. I decided to find a seat that offered a good view of the creek bottom and just wait.

I sat down and began to field-dress the fox squirrel, and before I finished it started to sleet. As I slipped the squirrel into my vest I saw a gray squirrel near the bottom of the steep hill, just slightly to my left, but it was gone before I could raise my rifle. A few minutes later, when the sleet intensified, I began to question my chances of getting another squirrel. At least I had chosen the right place to sit. Below the edge of the hilltop with my back to a large tree, I was somewhat sheltered from the weather.

From where I sat the hill dropped steeply for about 45 yards, leveling out at a sparsely wooded flat. Out from the bottom and to the left I could see a stand of tall hemlocks, and beneath the canopy was a view of the clear, fast moving water of Wolf Creek. The scene looked wild, as raw as the weather had become. As I waited to see if the conditions would improve, I recalled the red fox tracks I had found in the snow under these same hemlocks during the flintlock season the year before.

The tracks led out to the open flat, where the fox had made several circles around the base of a tall dead tree. Hunting squirrels, I thought. The fox tracks and I left the tree in different directions, but I found them again about 75 yards farther

along, when I turned to investigate some large patches of blood in the snow. I had found owl pellets beneath the hemlocks several times in the past, and I knew there had been some long-eared owls nesting in this area that spring, so when I first spotted the wing, I began to imagine the fight that might have taken place here.

My hasty guess proved to be wrong, though. When I got closer I saw that the wing wasn't an owl's. The color of the feathers and the length of bone had me stumped for a moment, but I finally recognized it as the wing of a great blue heron. What a lucky meal for a fox. Some movement off to my right stopped my reminiscing and returned my attention to the hunt.

The sleet had gradually subsided and the movement was a fox squirrel climbing up the steep hillside. It went up and out of sight over the edge of the hill without once stopping long enough for me to take a shot. Only a few minutes later, however, I saw the gray squirrel again, near the bottom of the hill to my left. One final well placed shot and I had my limit. It wasn't the first time I got six squirrels in one day, but it was the first time I shot all six with the .22. Along with the fact that it had taken me just six shots to do it, I felt as lucky as the fox. □

GROUSE TRENDS

The Game Commission monitors grouse populations by surveying dedicated grouse hunters who volunteer to keep track of their grouse hunting time and results. Last year these cooperators reported 10,000 hours hunted with 13,900 flushes and 930 grouse bagged. Last year's cooperator average flushing rate of 1.39 per hour was slightly below the 36-year average of 1.45 and was down 7 percent from the previous year's rate of 1.49. Each cooperator, on average, hunted 29 hours, had 40 flushes and took three birds during the 2000-01 hunting seasons. Our huntable grouse population has dropped from a population peak in 1994, but we expect it to increase over the next few years. Region flushing rates were: Northwest, 1.77; Southwest, 1.66; Northcentral, 1.47; Southcentral, 1.29; Southeast, .85; and Northeast, .83.

To become a grouse survey cooperator, contact PGC biologist Bill Palmer at 333 Sinking Creek Road, Spring Mills, PA 16875.

Lost!

ALL but one had returned. Through the snow they marched, trekking in the cold twilight toward the glowing windows of their mountaintop cabin. No deer today, and none the day before. But good conversation and a big dinner awaited them. This group had been hunting together for decades. For them, hunting was more than bagging deer. They kicked the snow off their boots and went inside.

"I guess Bob's still out," one hunter said.

"He went uphill this afternoon," said another, "across the road and up in the thick laurel."

The hunters took their seats around the long picnic table, the only enduring furniture in the camp. One man laid in a supply of split maple. A second went to the spring for water. Two hands of cards went by before the issue came up again.

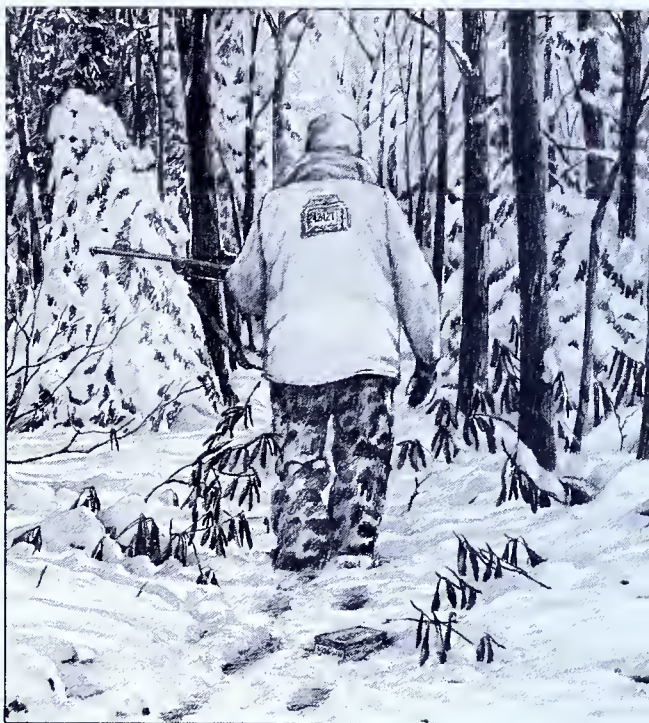
"You know, Bob ought to be here by now," said his bunkmate.

"He probably got a deer and is still field-dressing it," another chimed in.

"Yeah," another man agreed. "You know how meticulous Bob is."

They laughed and bent over their cards, enjoying the soft moments of friendship one finds in a hunting camp.

Outside, December's darkness enveloped the Lycoming County forest. No moon, no stars, just a low ceiling and patches of fog clinging to the hollows.



The trails turned icy.

"Where is that son of a gun?"

"It's 7:30. If he's dressing a deer, it better be a big one."

"I'm worried."

"Don't be. He's still got time."

Four years earlier, Bob had undergone bypass surgery. He was a smoker and the newest member of the group. He was the least familiar with the terrain. That's not to say Bob was a newcomer in the usual sense. This hunting party had been gathering each deer season for more than 30 years. Bob joined them only a decade ago. At other camps, he would have been a dean. Bob spent more time than the rest in actually hunting. First out, last in. That's Bob.

"He'll come in that door any minute now,

By T.B.T. Baldwin

with a buck bigger than the front porch,” one colleague said.

Dinner is always a late affair at deer camp, maybe not until eight or nine, postponed by the retelling of the day’s adventures, and then the card games. But as the clock turned toward eight this night, the jokes went flat.

“What if he’s hurt?”

“Then we would hear him shooting, firing for help.”

This soothed no one. Why no gunfire? No one mentioned what each hunter thought — Bob might be unable to summon aid.

The woods of Hyner Mountain must not be taken casually. The hogback ridge runs north above Lock Haven, forming the western edge of Pine Creek and the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon. One can hike for weeks and never see a soul. Deep ravines gouge Hyner’s sides. It’s rough country, some of the wildest in the East. Now Bob, the fellow everyone loved, was somewhere out there near the border of Potter, Lycoming and Clinton counties.

“Lost Hunter” is a term that invites clear thinking but rings no great alarm for Bucky, the chief of the Black Forest Fire Department and Rescue Squad. Finding lost sportsmen helped his department fashion itself a first-rate reputation. Bucky’s men were good at it. He did not share the worried looks of the men in fluorescent orange.

“Fire off some rounds,” Bucky suggested.

To men unaccustomed to firing deer rifles at night, the burst of flame from the barrel is quite a surprise. Several salutes punctuated the chill. The men waited. Then they heard but one lone reply — nothing further, just the one shot. One fellow raised his rifle and cut loose another barrage. This time there came only silence — no answer

at all. Two barrages and only one response. It puzzled everyone, including Bucky.

By this time the rescue squad had arrived. They piloted four-wheel drives and brought lanterns and stretchers. Some carried backpacks and rope. The hunters looked nervous. The rescuers displayed an all-in-a-night’s work sense of calm. They knew the trails.

It did not take long. They found Bob wandering in the woods not far from his favorite spot among the thick laurel. He was tired, cold and scared, but suffering no ill effects. He was a mile from camp and even, it was said, walking in the right direction.

Bob and the crew got back to camp about 10. They gathered around the picnic table for supper. The old woodstove never burned so hot.

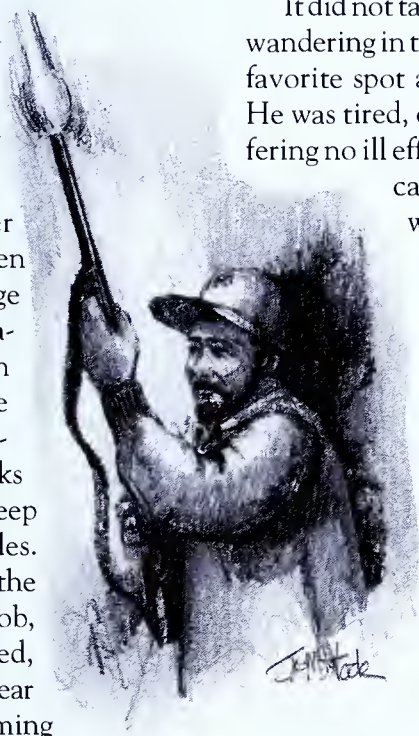
It turned out Bob had gotten confused well before sundown. It could have happened to anyone. Bob had been following a state-marked trail, but a recently bulldozed logging

trail cut across the path he was following. Fresh snow made the two indistinct. The trails sort of drifted together awhile, then the logger’s path meandered south down a shallow valley. Bob followed it, thinking he was still on the state trail.

Somewhere along the way Bob’s box of cartridges had fallen out, leaving him with only the single round in his chamber. That was why he did not fire in distress, and why he answered the fusillade with only one shot.

No police whistle? No topographical map? No pocket flashlight or matches?

Bob carries them now. □



Dark Nights and Bright Eyes

By Rodney Burns
Greene County WCO

MOTHER NATURE has her share of nighttime predators. The great horned owl sitting motionless in a hemlock tree waits to swoop down with silent wings on unsuspecting prey. But there are other predators that come out after dark. They sneak up on their prey with cars and trucks, shining a light in the eyes of defenseless animals to confuse them, and they use scoped rifles to look for “trophyies.” These predators are called poachers, and they’re why WCOs often don’t get much sleep during the fall.

On this cold, moonless night, great horned owls weren’t the only ones watching and waiting. Sitting on a hill, Deputy Harry Gillispie and I were also taking part in the nighttime vigil. As I stepped out of my vehicle and took a deep breath of frosty air so fresh that it tasted good, and looked at a million stars sparkling in the sky, I thought about that old TV commercial that says, “It doesn’t get any better than this.” The radio had been quiet, and Harry mentioned something about the lack of excitement. Everything changed in a hurry, though, when Harry exclaimed, “That car is spotlighting!”

I grabbed for my keys and tried to look at my watch at the same time, which didn’t work. I finally got my truck started and noticed it was 12:47, nearly two hours past legal spotlighting hours. As we rolled out of our park-



ing spot,

we had a decision to make: turn on our flashing red lights and stop the vehicle, or follow it like a cat playing with a mouse. “Let’s see what these guys are up to, Harry,” I said, as soon as they turned down an old

remote road. We fell in behind them, keeping far enough behind so as to not attract attention.

We needed their license plate information, in case they tried to run, and I immediately noticed that it was a West Virginia plate, which, being in the southwest corner of the state, was not unusual. The license plate light wasn't working, however, and I couldn't read the numbers. "If they slow down when they see a deer, get ready, because I am going to try to get real close," I said to Harry. "Where are all the deer?" I asked Harry, as usually the fields along this winding road are full of deer. I wanted to see what our suspects would do when they saw a deer, and I soon got my wish — and a lot more than I had bargained for. Their brake lights came on, but I was so busy concentrating on getting the license plate number that I didn't realize how close I was getting to their rear bumper. It was lucky for us that they were concentrating on the spotlight and the glowing eyes down in the woods, and not what was following behind them.

"Rifle! There's a rifle out the window!" hissed Harry. Seeing the rifle sent a shiver of excitement through our bodies. Following the beam of light, I could clearly see a buck walking through some brush and trees, but this deer was nervous and soon trotted off. They continued shining their light, but the rifle was pulled back into the car and down the road they went. Knowing that an attempt to kill helps prove our case, I couldn't help but think: lucky deer, lucky poachers, unlucky us.

"Radio John and Ed and have them get over here, because these guys are going to run for West Virginia and we might need their help," I told Harry. John Riley and Ed Smith are longtime Greene County deputies who are extremely reliable, and I knew that if I asked for help, they would do everything possible to get here.

"Your deputy unit is coming to assist," Sharon, our dispatcher, replied.

I was hoping that the spotlighters

wouldn't do anything until our help arrived, but they soon stopped and their spotlight illuminated a big doe lying in a hayfield. Now the rifle was back out the window and pointed at the deer, and the spotlight went in endless circles around the deer as, it seemed, the poacher tried to get the crosshairs lined up.

I had mixed emotions as we waited for the shot: The conservationist in me wanted to save this deer, but as a law enforcement officer and knowing how our judicial process works, I wanted all the proof I could get for a successful prosecution. In this case, a dead deer would be the best proof there could be. No crack of a rifle shot followed, though, and the rifle was pulled back, and on down the road they went, spotlighting as they drove. Now we knew these poachers were fussy. They didn't want just any deer; they wanted a buck.

The vehicle continued on, the occupants still searching with their light, not realizing that two wildlife conservation officers — with two more on the way — were following them. At one point I got a little too far behind, and trying to make up for lost time I almost blew my cover when taillights suddenly changed to brake lights as a buck crossed the road in front of the suspects and disappeared into a patch of woods. Out came the spotlight and rifle as the driver tried to pick out the deer. As luck would have it, the driver had pulled into a game lands parking lot to get a clear shot at the buck. Knowing there was only one way out and my truck was sitting right in the middle of it, I told Harry to get ready.

I'm sure the individuals in the car were shocked when the dark, quiet night was shattered by flashing red lights and two officers shouting, "State officers, keep your hands where we can see them." I told the driver, Jake, to

step out of the car, and as I checked him for weapons, I noticed fresh blood on his pants. Harry checked the passenger, Johnny, and we were disturbed to find that he had his 10-year-old son with him. I reached in the car and retrieved a fully loaded .22 Magnum rifle (with the safety off), unloaded it and then put it in my truck, along with the spotlight. I then asked Jake if we could look in the trunk. "Sure," he replied. "I have nothing to hide." There was no deer, but fresh blood and hair were clearly visible.

"Where did the blood and hair come from, Jake?" I asked.

"I killed a buck today in West Virginia," he said.

I didn't believe it, because the blood looked too fresh for that, but West Virginia's deer season was open. "What time did you kill this buck?" I asked.

"I got it around 6 o'clock this evening."

"You know as well as I do that it's dark at that time," I said.

Jake swallowed, looked at the ground and said, "Oh, yeah, it was 10 until dark."

At a different time and place I might have found that answer amusing, but I was quickly losing my patience. "Okay, where is this buck now?" I asked.

"Down at Johnny's camp in West Virginia," Jake said.

"Why didn't you shoot the doe you had spotted earlier?" I asked.

"We were looking for a buck," he answered, which confirmed our suspicions, and also would be a good statement to present at a court hearing.

Johnny argued that he was just out for a ride and had nothing to do with trying to kill a deer. I told him that while following their car for several miles, and watching Jake aiming at three different deer, I never once saw him attempt to stop Jake in any way, so he would also be charged. While we were issuing Jake and Johnny citations, John and Ed arrived, and Harry filled them in on the details. We all agreed that we needed to look at the buck in West Virginia, so I told John and Ed to wait with the suspects, who were now being cooperative.

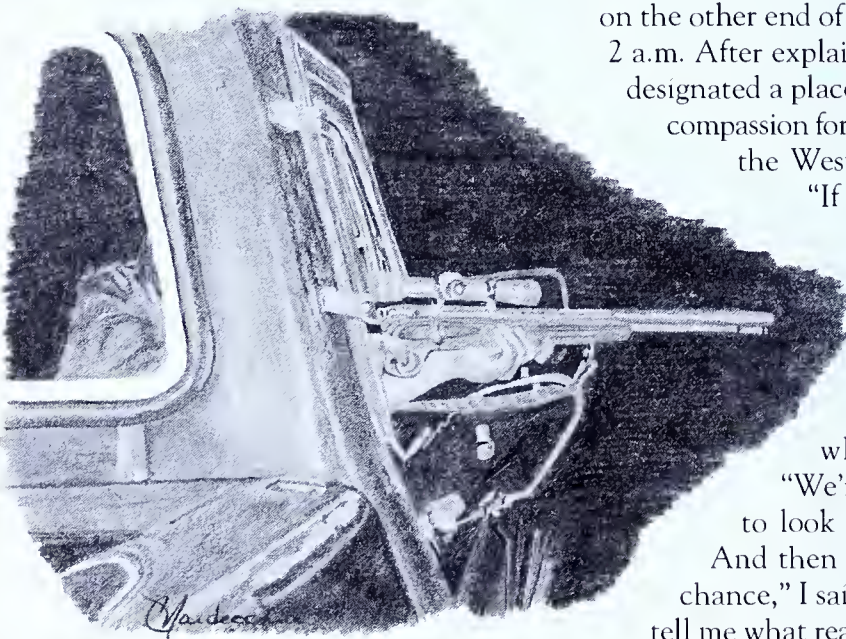
Harry and I drove to the top of a hill where I could get cell phone service, and I called Kevin Goff, the West Virginia DNR officer in charge of the county where the camp was located. A sleepy hello answered on the other end of the line, as it was now 2 a.m. After explaining the situation, we designated a place to meet. I felt a little compassion for Jake and Johnny when the West Virginia officer said,

"If I have to get out of bed at this time of the night, these boys are going to jail."

When we got back to Jake and Johnny, I explained what was happening.

"We're going to your camp to look at the buck, Johnny."

And then I turned to Jake, "last chance," I said. "Now is the time to tell me what really happened, because

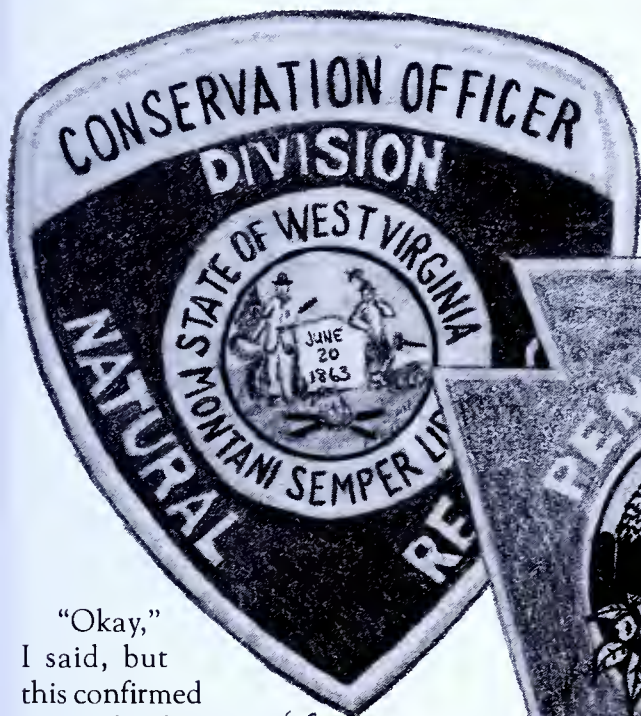


when we get to where you killed this deer, you're going to have to show me where you field-dressed it."

"I didn't field-dress the deer because I was in a hurry, but I got it legally in West Virginia," Jake said.

are both deputy federal wildlife conservation officers, so we have authority to deal with this violation.

We jumped in our vehicles and headed down some twisting roads, heading for Johnny's camp, and finally we turned in at a neat cabin nestled along a dirt road. We told Johnny to take his son into the cabin so he could stay warm, and we would go look at the buck with Jake. As Jake slid



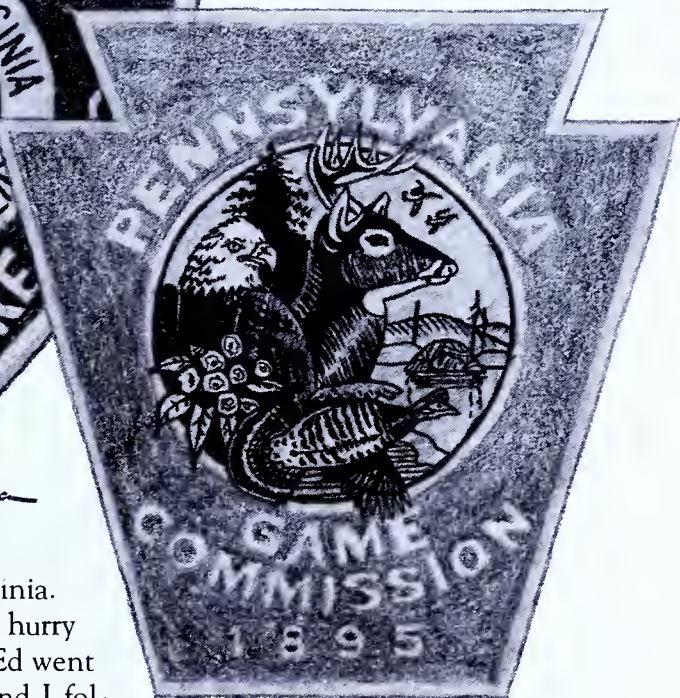
"Okay,"

I said, but this confirmed my thinking that the buck was killed in Greene

Spencer

County and taken to West Virginia. Why else would he be in such a hurry and not field-dress it? John and Ed went back out to patrol, and Harry and I followed the suspects. As I turned my truck south and headed into West Virginia, I called the Southwest Region Office at Ligonier and reported that my deputy and I were leaving the state to meet a West Virginia DNR officer to investigate a violation.

We met officer Kevin Goff in a dark parking lot 10 miles into West Virginia. As we filled him in on the night's activities, we told him that we suspected the buck at Johnny's camp was actually killed in Pennsylvania and hauled across state lines, which would make this a violation of a federal law called the Lacey Act. Kevin and I



open the door to an old shed, I couldn't help but feel disgust as I looked at a beautiful 8-point, shot between the eyes and still not field-dressed. What a shame, I thought, that some lucky hunter would never have an opportunity to legally hunt this deer.

Kevin had Jake get into his patrol vehicle and they went looking for the place where the deer was killed. They immediately came back and Kevin said that Jake had been lying. "That buck wasn't killed down here," Kevin said.

"But Jake isn't going to change his story," he added. We gave Jake some time to think about what was happening, so we went to see Johnny. Kevin and I stepped up on the porch of the cabin and knocked. "We need to talk," I said to Johnny as he stepped out on the porch.

"I don't know anything about that deer," Johnny said.

As Kevin and I explained what we knew, Johnny finally got a resigned look on his face, and looking at the ground said, "We killed that deer in Greene County at 10 to-night."

Feeling elated that we finally got the truth, but not wanting to show it, I said to Johnny, "Would you give us a written statement describing what you and Jake did tonight?"

He sighed, looked at his watch, (it was now 4 a.m.) and replied, "Yeah, we did it, so I'll do whatever it takes to make you guys go away."

After receiving Johnny's written statement and talking to Jake, who grudgingly admitted to what had happened, I issued them both citations and got ready to leave. Both Johnny and Jake shook our hands, said that they understood that we have a job to do, and they had learned an expensive lesson. As Harry and I got ready to leave, Kevin was issuing citations for transporting an illegally killed deer into West Virginia.

Harry and I reflected on the night's activities on the long trip back to my house. It was a good night to be a "game warden" we decided, and even

though one buck was killed, we had also saved one. Hopefully the fines that the poachers would pay would deter them from doing this again. But mainly we talked about the 10-year-old son of Johnny, and that hopefully this lesson would help him grow up to be an ethical hunter with an appreciation for wildlife and a sense of what is right and wrong.

As I parked in my driveway at 5:30, I realized that in two hours I'd have to leave for my parent's home in Jefferson County for Thanksgiving dinner. Thinking about Thanksgiving made me realize all that I had to be thankful for on that night. Starting with my deputies, Harry, Ed and John, who I trust and rely on, and also the cooperation from officers in other agencies, such as Kevin Goff, who got out of bed on a cold

night to do us a favor. And finally, I'm thankful for the opportunity to serve and protect the natural resources of this state.

People often ask if the late nights and the danger make my job, which often goes unappreciated, worth it. These people don't understand the satisfaction conservation officers get from doing this job. Few people know what took place on that dark, frosty night in rural Greene County, but my deputies and I know that we did our jobs to protect wildlife. Let's hope that as long as there are poachers like Johnny and Jake, there will be WCOs who are dedicated to protecting our natural resources, and who will always do their jobs, even on the darkest of nights and on the loneliest of roads, with nobody watching but a hungry great horned owl. □

Let's hope that as long as there are poachers there will be WCOs who are dedicated to protecting our natural resources, and who will always do their jobs, even on the darkest of nights and on the loneliest of roads.

West Nile Virus and Wild Turkeys

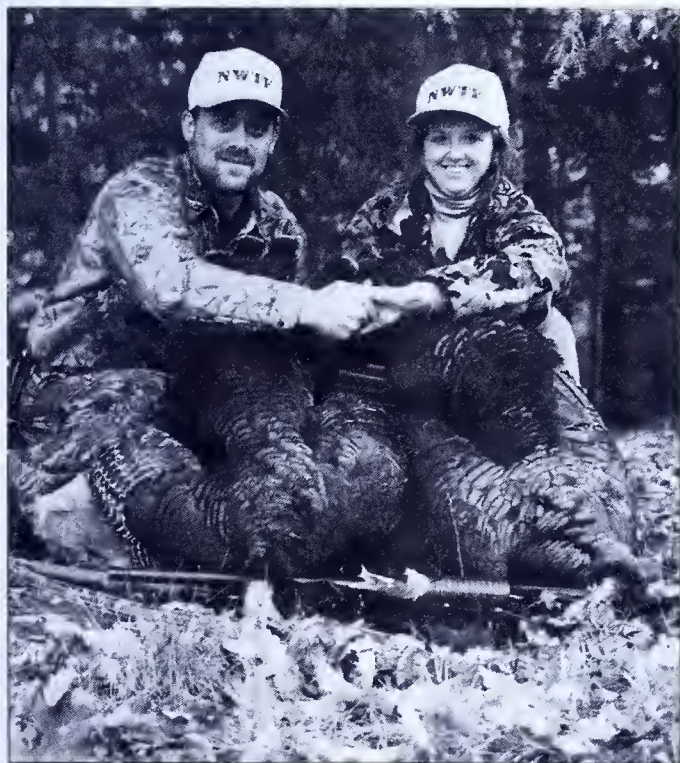
By Bob Eriksen
NWTF Regional Biologist

THE WEST NILE VIRUS arrived in North America in 1999. Before emerging as a problem in the northeastern United States, the virus had been documented in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and western and central Asia. The most serious threat of West Nile Virus is encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) in humans and horses. The virus is spread by an insect vector, which draws blood from an infected animal, keeps the virus in its system and then bites and infects another animal or human. There have also been instances of certain wild and domestic birds dying from this disease.

West Nile Virus was first noticed near New York City in the summer of 1999, when crows and other birds were found dead or near death. At the same time, some people became ill with an unknown neurologic disease. Experts with the Center for Disease Control and the Southeast Poultry Research Laboratory in Athens, Georgia, began testing dead crows and blood drawn from humans who were ill with encephalitis. They were able to isolate and identify the virus, solving the mystery of what disease was causing the trouble. It is still not known, how-

ever, how the virus got to the United States from Europe.

The medical profession was greatly concerned about the potential for this disease to cause substantial illness among humans. Although anyone may become infected with



Experts say there is very little potential for West Nile Virus to become a major new disease in either domestic or wild turkeys. That's good news for hunters like RICK and PATTY TROUTMAN of Dornsite. The husband and wife team got these jakes last fall in Northumberland County.

West Nile Virus, children, people more than 50, and those with compromised immune systems develop the most severe cases. People in poor health can die from the disease. Horses are severely affected and often die when they develop the virus.

Monitoring efforts began that summer and continue in the Northeast to document the spread of the virus. Mosquitoes are tested, along with blood from sentinel chickens (chickens kept in cages near mosquito infested areas). The agricultural community, especially horse owners and the poultry industry, worried about the potential impact the virus could have on the livelihood of farmers. Experts were worried that turkeys might be a potential reservoir for the virus, because there are high-density turkey farming operations and large wild turkey populations in the eastern United States. Turkey hunters were also concerned about the new disease. Could it affect wild turkey populations? Could eating a wild turkey infected with the virus transmit the disease to the hunter's family?

Researchers at the Southeast Poultry Research Laboratory tested domestic turkey poults to answer some of the questions about the disease and turkeys. The results were published in *Avian Diseases*, a journal for pathologists and veterinarians.

Turkey poults were inoculated with a dose of the West Nile Virus large enough to cause infection and were then observed and tested for a period of time. If domestic turkeys were highly susceptible to West Nile Virus, wild turkeys probably would be too. All of the turkey poults deliberately injected with the virus developed the

virus and had antibodies in their blood within seven days of being exposed. However, the poults did not appear to develop severe symptoms of the disease. Only one of the tested poults died, but not from the virus. The level of virus in the blood of the infected turkeys was too low for the disease to be transmitted from the turkeys to other animals or humans by mosquitoes. There was no transmission of the virus from the infected turkeys to other turkeys kept in the same pens.

The experts concluded that there is very little potential for West Nile Virus to become a major new disease in either domestic or wild turkeys. The virologists concluded that neither domestic nor wild turkeys would be a host or reservoir for the virus. That's good news for wild turkey enthusiasts and the poultry industry.

All this does not mean that wild turkeys cannot get West Nile Virus. Wild turkeys can contract the disease, but it is not likely to cause death or any permanent problems. On the other hand, crows, jays and some other bird species are severely affected by West Nile Virus. Two or three wild turkeys have tested positive for exposure to West Nile Virus in New York, but none of the birds were thought to have died from West Nile. It appears we don't have to worry about our wild turkey flocks being decimated or even greatly impacted by West Nile Virus. Turkey hunters should not worry about eating any wild turkey that appeared to be acting normally before being harvested. Your chances of contracting any disease from cooked wild game are extremely low. Obviously, sick wild turkeys — and other game birds — should be reported to the nearest Game Commission region office. Other birds, especially sick crows, blue jays and raptors, should be reported to the Department of Health hotline, 1-877-PAHEALTH. □

Honker Heaven, Montco-Style

By Amy Francisco

MONTGOMERY COUNTY (fondly shortened to Montco) snuggles comfortably into the southeastern corner of the state. Although it adjoins megalopolis Philadelphia, Montco manages to attract its share of Canada geese, which find the

county a convenient stopover in their biannual migrations. Since the 1970s, a multitude of Canadas have opted for an easier "route," taking up permanent residence here, rather than retracing age-old Atlantic Flyway flight plans.

Thanks to the Philadelphia Suburban Water Company, a veritable Shangri-La to any overhead goose was created in 1957 with the impoundment of two branches of the Perkiomen Creek. Green Lane Reservoir, with its 814 acres and the surrounding open space of the Green Lane Park (including Deep Creek and Knight lakes) have continued to provide an appealing environment. The reservoir remains a popular watering hole for *Branta Canadensis*.

The burgeoning population of resident Canada geese contributed to the contamination and closing of the public swimming area a few years ago,



Amy Francisco Photos

After getting permission to hunt on a farm we gathered materials to build our goose blind. From left to right, above, JON FARLEY, JOHN PLOWMAN and BILL FRANCISCO weave cornstalks through some old fencing. Three dilapidated but usable picnic benches and a dozen or so 6-foot well-aged fence stakes completed our supplies: We were in the goose blind building business.



when high levels of bacteria were discovered in Deep Creek Lake. Several tactics employed to "thin the herd," have not been effective. These have included trap-and-transfer programs, egg addling (shaking or stirring of egg contents to prevent hatching), and special depredation hunts. However, it is hoped that the early and late hunting seasons targeted at the abundant resident population will reduce the problems.

Two catalysts spurred my decision to seek out a prime hunting area for a Montco goose blind. First was my recent introduction to waterfowling. A chill-to-the-bone winter day spent in a goose pit with four equally eager huntresses and our male "escort" on a windswept field near the Susquehanna River opened the door. The clincher was the 1999-2000 return of the regular Canada goose season in southeastern Pennsylvania after a hiatus of several years.

In addition to an early resident

Canada goose season in September, a regular fall/winter 15-day limited hunting season, with a daily bag limit of one daily, was permitted in this area that year. This is due to the improved status of the migratory Atlantic Population Canada geese, which had declined drastically in recent years. One factor influencing the depressed population was poor nesting habitat conditions on the breeding grounds, leading to low brood survival. Regulated harvest quotas are, in turn, set to correspond to population density.

The fact that the number of breeding pairs and successful gosling production has been increasing is cause for celebration. This upswing is due to management efforts and the preservation of and improvements to the natural habitat. The resumption of longer seasons and larger bag limits in the future could be in store if the population recovery continues. (This year there are more than 30 days in a split season framework for migratory Canadas.)

The first order of business for my hunting expedition was finding a field that coincided with the comings and goings of Canadas. As a veterinarian, my husband, Bill, has connections with area farmers. Bill, therefore, was dubbed "front man," and soon had found an ideal property owned by a willing dairy farmer client. (Geese can be a real nuisance in a newly sprouting grain field.) Perched on a hill above the reservoir, this farmer's fields stretch invitingly close to pathways geese use as they wing their way between feeding and loafing areas. Permission to construct a blind and hunt was secured, the property was scouted, and geese were flying everywhere.

Our friend, John Plowman, kindly volunteered to be our personal "education liaison." With his more than 40 years of waterfowling experience, we happily de-

Amy Francisco



BILL FRANCISCO watches and waits for honkers on a farm near the Green Lane Reservoir in Montgomery County.

ferred our questions about goose hunting to John. The know-how of building a blind and hunting techniques were provided.

As a birdwatcher and wildlife observer, scouting proved to be a breeze. The pre-season patterning of geese, much like birding and all of my outdoor pursuits, gave me ample excuse to spend just a few more hours enjoying the out-of-doors. Armed with binoculars and a thermos of steaming coffee, I checked out the territory in preparation for our November hunt, looking for routine flight patterns and any habits that might help us in our quest. One morning's count of more than 800 geese, with several strafing runs by eager-to-land honkers, made this myopic, middle-aged matron anxious for opening day.

In the interim, we gathered materials to build our blind. Another local farmer donated both cornstalks and old fencing. Three dilapidated but usable picnic benches and a dozen or so 6-foot well-aged fence stakes completed our supplies: We were in the goose blind building business.

Prior to the November opener, five of the hunters arranged to meet on the hilltop to construct the temporary blind. "Our" landowner had cooperated by leaving several rows of standing corn to aid in concealing the blind. Choosing the high spot in the middle of the field as a prime location (geese feel more secure if their visibility is unobstructed), our stakes were driven into the ground in an almost rectangular formation.

At the two rear corners, an angled post for extra support was added. By not making an exact rectangle, and with the use of a well-placed extra stake or two, we created a hidden entranceway. Old, rusty cattle fencing was then attached to the stakes. Cornstalks from bundles cut earlier in the season and allowed to dry were then woven through the 4-foot high wire fencing. Add to that some foxtail, the three picnic benches for comfort, and a goose blind was born.

Late in the afternoon before opening

day, we set out the decoy spread. Geese are a gregarious lot, and the purpose of decoys is to lure the geese close to the blind but not too close, because there is then a chance of flaring them, but within an effective 35-yard, or closer, shotgun range.

Using several dozen shell and silhouette decoys, we arranged them according to goose flight and feeding preferences. Geese tend to land into the wind, and they generally choose not to land over other geese. We cooperated by providing an inviting open space.

To be convincing, the majority of the decoys would also have to be facing into the wind, as this is the way geese normally feed — to have the optimum escape liftoff. We spaced the decoys a few feet apart, with several small groups of three to five birds resembling family units. One or two heads-up decoys per every dozen simulated the sentries that guard a real flock as they feed.

Dressed in camouflage from head to toe, and with our hunting and migratory game bird licenses and migratory duck stamps, we arrived in the pre-dawn hours of opening day. The wind had not shifted noticeably, making it unnecessary to rearrange the decoys. Once the sunrise brightened our hilltop and the first birds began to move, we discussed and established shooting lanes, loaded our 12-gauges with the required non-toxic ammo (steel BBB was my shotshell) and waited patiently. The gun of choice among the group was the autoloader, with its 3-shell capacity, however, my Browning Citori over/under with modified choke eventually proved to be quite efficient.

Bluebird days, with clear, calm, sunny skies and some high, cottony clouds tend to make for slow goose hunting days. With a few

well-orchestrated waves of the two black flags to attract their attention, however, plus some skillful calling by John, we managed to entice several flocks of Canadas toward our decoy spread. We kept our heads down and stayed as quiet and still as possible to avoid detection. Finally, a wary flock circled several times, just out of range. As the birds passed just overhead, we could hear the whistling of their wings. We gingerly peered through openings in the blind, and suddenly saw their webbed feet drop as they settled in for a landing.

In our excitement we must have forgotten the basic concepts of shotgun shooting, because we all missed. How difficult it can be to focus on one target, establish a proper lead, and remember to keep swinging amongst a flurry of wings. We had a good time but departed empty-handed.

Thanksgiving morning, however, proved to be different in several ways. The weather was perfect for goose hunting. A damp, chilly, overcast day with low clouds and the threat of drizzle had the geese flying low. Flock after flock responded to first the hail call, followed by the greeting call, with a few feeding gabbles for good measure. It wasn't long before each of us had bagged our goose.

One of the Canadas was sporting both a neck and leg band. Reporting the recovery of banded birds is crucial for future population management and the setting of hunting regulations, plus it provides valuable information on waterfowl movements, survival and harvest rates. We soon learned from the Bird Banding Laboratory (1-800-327-BAND) that this bird was an 8-year-old female that had hatched near Bally, a stone's throw from the reservoir. We had played a part in managing a valuable resource, and what a wonderful time we had. Other



JIM NYCE

Geese taken on Thanksgiving morning at "Honker Heaven" by, left to right, JANET NYCE, AMY and BILL FRANCISCO, and JIM NYCE.

than supplying meat for the table, a primary purpose of hunting is to have fun, and we definitely accomplished that.

The end of the season arrived all too quickly. Our final chore was to disassemble the blind. All spent shells were gathered, the makings of our fortress were stored for the next fall, and we left no signs that we had been temporary occupants, other than a token of our appreciation at the farmer's front door.

Spending the season observing and hunting Canada geese has increased my appreciation and respect for this magnificent bird. As a result, I plan to devote time during the off-season to refining my calling and shooting skills.

The necessity of preserving our sensitive wetland habitats for this precious natural resource is a lesson that is reinforced while afield. The Canada goose is responding positively to wildlife management practices. My hope is that this trend will continue, so that future generations can also enjoy the sport of waterfowling.

"V" formations high in the sky and the resonant *ka-ronk* have ushered in the changing seasons from time immemorial. I'm in honker heaven . . . Montco-style. □

Have You Ever Eaten Bear Meat?

By Albert Wutsch

Director, Academy of Culinary Arts,
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

SOME OF THE bear hunters I know are as ardent about huntin' bears as some turkey fanatics I know are about turkeys. Funny thing is, though, compared to turkey hunters, most bear hunters don't know what to do with the meat. Many times I've heard people say, "Yea, I eat the meat," but it's obvious they seem to struggle through the cooking process, not really understanding how to prepare it. Then there are those who don't hunt bears for the meat, but rather for the magnificent trophies they make. Yet even for those folks, the problem is that too many have never sampled a good bear roast or stew.

With record numbers of bears being harvested here in Pennsylvania, now's a good time to discuss the preparation of bear meat. The first concern to arise when the subject of eating bear meat comes up is often, "I thought I would get trichinosis from eating bear meat."

Pennsylvania's bear biologist Mark Tement insists bear meat be cooked well-done, because the meat could easily carry trichinosis, and the antibodies of *Toxoplasma gondii*, a parasite that causes toxoplasmosis in humans. However, both of these parasites can easily be destroyed just by cooking the meat to an internal temperature of 160 degrees. Truth is, today there's more concern about the use of domesticated beef from Europe than there ever will be of eating bear meat or any other game meat. So, now that we have overcome the concerns associated with trichi-

nosis and other parasites, let's talk about taste.

Not all bear meat will taste the same. Pennsylvania black bears will not taste at all like Alaskan brown bears that have been feeding on king salmon. Black bears eat primarily vegetation. Also, bear meat from a spring bear is very lean; it has little fat cover and fat within the muscles. Bear meat from an animal taken in the fall, however, has lots of fat, not just on the outside surfaces but throughout the muscles as well. This fat must be removed because it will impart a gamey taste to the meat. It will also sour faster, so the meat should be cooled as quickly as possible.

It is important that you inspect the carcass and meat, as you would with any game animal. Inspect the internal organs and discard all bloodshot meat.

Field Care

It's important that hunters get the meat cooled down as quickly as possible. Larger muscle mass, combined with an extra layer of fat and a very dense hide means it takes twice as long to cool the meat of a bear than that of a deer. Unfortunately, too many hunters are more concerned about saving the hide than they are the meat. Do your homework. There is too much good meat being wasted because hunters are not prepared to deal with it.

Good sites for this information are: <http://www.pgc.state.pa.us> and <http://www.outdoorsdirectory.com/magazine>, and go to “Black bear meat care and preparation.”

Selecting a Cooking Method

There is no mystery to cooking bear meat; it's the same as any other meat. The cut determines the cooking method. All cuts along the back or loin are tender. These should be cooked with dry cooking methods, such as broiling, grilling, roasting and sautéing. All these cooking methods use high heat, fast cooking times and, again, a tender cut of meat.

The cuts from the forequarters are not as tender; as a matter of fact, they're fairly tough. These should be ground for sausages, chili or ground meats, or cut into stew meat. The hind legs are also fairly tough and should be cooked with moisture, for long periods of time, using lower temperatures. The cooking methods best suited for the hind legs are roasting with moisture, braising, stewing, barbecuing and pressure cooking. Canned bear meat is great for a delicious, tender, quick meal. When canning, the key to a good quality product is removing as much fat as possible.

Rubs, cures, marinades and brines all work well for bear meat. Always remove all tendons, fat and tacky membrane from bear meat for a tender, less gamey tasting meat. You can substitute bear meat for any venison recipes as long as you substitute the same cut of meat. You can even make bear sausage by substituting bear meat for venison. Remember, the most important steps that affect the tenderness and taste are what you do at the cutting board and in the pan or oven. These key steps of all the cooking methods can be found in my book, *The Art of Cooking Venison*.

Information regarding the book can be found at <http://www.venisoncache.com>. Following are some great recipes using Pennsylvania's finest bear meat. They work well for any game meat.

Good hunting and eating!

Bear Goulash

- 2 lbs bear meat, 1/2-inch cubes
- 1/4 cup flour
- salt & pepper
- 2 Tbsp Hungarian paprika
- 4 strips bacon, diced
- 1 cup diced onion
- 1 Tbsp minced garlic
- 1/2 tsp caraway seed
- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 1 pint beef broth
- 1 bay leaf

Sprinkle 1/2-inch cubes with salt, pepper, paprika and flour. Place diced bacon in 2- 4-inch deep pan, cook until fat is rendered and bacon is crisp. Add meat, lightly brown, add onion and garlic, sauté until translucent. Add caraway and bay leaf. Be careful not to burn the paprika. Add tomato, sauté. Add broth. Bring to boil. The flour will slightly thicken the sauce when it comes to a boil. Place in 350-degree oven, cook until meat is tender, approximately 1 hour. Serve over spaetzle or home-made noodles.

Bear Chili

- 1/4 cup oil
- 2 lbs bear meat
- 2 lbs pork butt
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 3 Tbsp chopped garlic
- 1/2 cup chili powder
- 1 Tbsp paprika
- 1/2 cup cumin
- 1/4 cup kosher salt
- 1 quart crushed tomatoes
- 1 pint beef broth

Combine meat and grind through coarse die. Grind a second time through

Albert Wutsch, director of Indiana University of Pennsylvania Academy of Culinary Arts, is a certified executive chef and culinary educator who combines his mastery of cooking with his passion for the outdoors. Wutsch has been a guest speaker for many sports shows, including the Eastern Sports and Outdoor Show.

the medium die. Heat oil, add meat and brown. Cook thoroughly, add onion and garlic. Combine spices and then add to mixture. Add tomato and broth and cook for one hour. Serve with crackers, elbow macaroni or beans, onions, sour cream and grated cheese.

Bear Taco & Enchilada Meat

- 1 lbs bear meat
- 1 lbs pork butt
- 2 pkgs McCormick taco spice blend

Combine meat and grind through coarse die. Grind a second time through the medium die. Cook meat, drain fat, add spices, add water as stated on package, and cook until water has evaporated. Serve taco meat with chopped onions, lettuce, cheese, sour cream, guacamole and salsa. Or place in soft flour tortilla with refried beans, green chilies, salsa and cheese. Top with enchilada sauce and bake.

Fresh Hot Italian Bear Sausage

- 2½ lbs bear meat
- 2½ lbs pork butt
- 3 Tbsp salt
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp hot pepper flakes
- ¼ tsp ground coriander
- ¼ tsp caraway seed
- 2 tsp fresh cracked black pepper

- 1½ tsp fennel seeds
- ¼ cup red wine

Mix spices and toss with meat. Add wine and toss again. Mix well and grind meat through ¼-inch die (twice). Make into patties or stuff into hog casings for links. You may also store this as bulk and use for lasagna, meat sauce or pizza. Other variations work just as well, such as bear meat tomato sauce with ricotta cheese and penne pasta, bear meat meatballs, bear meatloaf or stuffed peppers.

Teriyaki Bear Loin

- 2 lbs bear loin
- 8 oz Lawry's teriyaki marinade
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp fresh cracked black pepper

Remove all fat and silver skin from loin. Tie meat with butchers twine. Mix spices add to marinade. Add marinade to meat and marinate for four hours. Cook on grill at medium heat, sear outside, browning well. Baste meat with marinade, cook meat well done, approximately 45 minutes. Stick meat with fork; if juices run clear, it is well done. Serve with baked potatoes and glazed carrots.

The Art of Cooking Venison can be ordered direct from Cache Creek Enterprises, PO Box 1374, Indiana, PA 15701, for \$10 plus \$2.50 for shipping and handling. It can also be purchased from Bass Pro Shops, Barnes and Noble, Walden or Borders bookstores. For on-line ordering and other information, visit <http://www.venisoncache.com>. E-mail at cacheckr@microserve.net, or call 724-349-2067. □

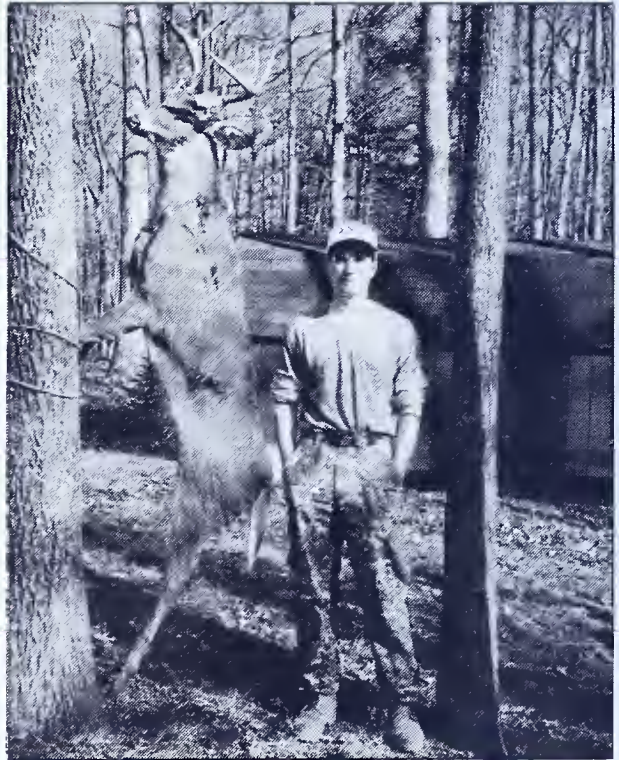
This is



STAN DUBOWSKI, Erie, above, got this 205-pound bruin in Warren County. **LARA YOCKEY**, Adrian, right, used her Remington 870 20-gauge to down this jake in Armstrong County.



Mother and daughter KATHY and AMY BACKEL, Dillsburg, got these opening day bucks just minutes apart last year in York County.

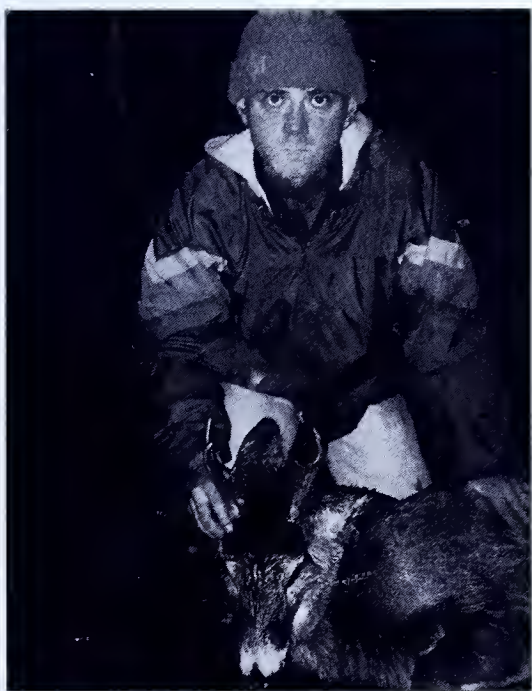


CHRIS MAUGANS, Mechanicsburg, above, got this 135-pound 8-point near Horse Valley in Perry County. Way to go, Chris! **JENNIFER QUALK**, Coal Center, left, got her buck in Washington County.

November



MARK GROSSMAN, Boyers, left, got this 200-pound bear in Clinton County. BRENT RICHMOND, above, tagged this 12-pound bearded hen in Sullivan County.



RUSSELL BRUCE, Gallitzin, got this 7-point with a palmated rack in Blair County last year. 13-year-old CORY JOHN NOLAN, Derry, middle right, got his big 16-point in Washington County. 15-year-old BENJAMIN THOMPSON, Fleming, right, got his 8-point in Centre County.



NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Penn's Woods Sketchbook/Bob Sopchick

PGC elk biologist
Rawley

Cogan, videographer
Hal Korber and I walk
a game lands road just
inside a treeline border-
ing a field. "There
they go" Rawley
whispers, and we
hustle through a
row of pines to see
a herd of elk van-
ish into the heavy

mist. I could still hear the pounding of their hooves in the distance. That sound in itself, of large herd animals running, hooves cleaving earth, is an inspiring, ancient sound that stirs the fire of the hunter inside.

We walk out into the field, and Rawley says, "You can smell where the elk were grazing when they spooked." The scent of the elk lingered in the moist August air, an odor of cut grasses and sweet musk, not unlike that of a cottontail rabbit nest, but more robust.

I was in Elk County to gather some final field research on elk for a series of interpretive signs that I was designing that would be placed at the elk viewing wall on Winslow Hill. I also wanted to gain a better understanding of the land, for studying any animal separate of its habitat is to know only part of its story.

The almost 900 square miles that comprises Pennsylvania's elk range is rugged and beautiful country. It has a decidedly western flavor of vast, grassy meadows stretching far into the distance, "parks" as they call them out west, all surrounded by the dark rim of the forest. This is home to a diverse population of wildlife, of which the centerpiece is the magnificent Rocky Mountain elk. From a purely aesthetic level no other North American mammal has the regal presence of this great deer, that combines awesome power with pure grace.

Elk truly are treasures of the wild, and with successful reintroductions during the last 20 years in Kentucky, Arkansas and Wisconsin, an elk renaissance of sorts is sweeping those states fortunate enough to have the space, resources, and dedicated individuals and groups to help manage and support them. Other states, including New York, Mis-



souri, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia are also considering introductions.

Most amazing is that elk are here at all, having risen like a phoenix once again, giving man a third opportunity to preserve them. Elk are native to Penn's Woods, but by 1867 they had vanished from a radically changing landscape. From 1913 to 1926, 177 Rocky Mountain elk from Yellowstone National Park were released in Pennsylvania, but the elk hung on only in the northcentral region. Their numbers continued to decline and hunting was curtailed.

The landscape continued to be dramatically altered, mostly by extensive strip-mining that opened great swaths of land. By 1974 a dwindling herd of 38 elk remained. The ravaged landscape set the stage for ambitious reclamation projects. That, along with additional habitat enhancement and expanded food sources created favorable elk range. Today a burgeoning herd of almost 600 elk now inhabit the northcentral region, and for the first time in 70 years hunters will once again be able to experience the thrill and privilege of hunting elk in Pennsylvania.

Later that day, Hal and I watched a vocal herd of cows and calves moving through some dense bottomland, and when they were out of sight we heard an abbreviated bugle. We asked Rawley, who was positioned out ahead if he had seen the bugling bull, but he said that it was a cow that had bugled. Elk bark, squeal, whine, yelp, chuckle and grunt. Bulls have a wide variety of bugling vocalizations of varying intensities, each serving a different purpose during the rut. The most familiar to our ears is the classic, three-octave roaring scream of a bull. Bulls probably bugle more than we know because many bugles are low-key and audible only from short distances. Translation of bugling is speculative, but essentially bugling advertises the dynamics of an individual bull to other bulls and to cows who ultimately select the prime bull to breed with.

Elk are impressive animals, and dwarf the numerous whitetails often seen feeding in the same fields. A mature bull elk may weigh more than 800 pounds and stands 5-feet high at the shoulder, but a good-sized whitetail buck is about 150 pounds and stands about waist high. Looking out over the misty fields I could imagine what it had been like to see the extinct Irish elk (*Megaloceros giganteus*) trot across a peat bog during the Pleistocene Epoch 10,000 years ago. The Irish elk had massive antlers that spanned 12 feet, and was 7 feet high at the shoulders and weighed as much as three mature bull elk.

Elk have a seasonal dependency on water — find a cool river on a hot day and you'll probably find elk nearby. Research has shown that 80 percent of elk activity in summer occurs near a permanent water source. Lactating cows depend on water and rutting bulls wallow in swampy muck. Water also helps elk to regulate their body tem-



peratures. We stopped along the Sinnemahoning Creek to photograph a large bull standing in midstream cooling off.

I RETURNED TO Winslow Hill in late August one year later, and was pleased to see that the people gathered at the elk viewing area were reading the interpretive signs and found them informative. As the brilliant orange sun was setting in the west and the valley cooled, I glassed the far ridge but didn't see any elk, but did see a tremendous whitetail buck with tall antlers pop into view. He stood stock still for a few seconds, then lowered his head and eased under the branches of a tree.

One of the best ways to get a feel of elk country is by horseback, and earlier that afternoon I was part of a group of other riders led by Don

"Woody" Woods. Woody's surefooted horses took us through dense pine forests, brushy draws and isolated meadows. We skirted numerous beaver dams, and grouse whirled out of the pines as we passed. There was elk sign everywhere, including several small pines and autumn olive that had been thrashed by bulls. We spooked some elk out of the black timber, but only saw their tan flanks as they slipped away. On our return to Woody's place there was one particularly scenic vista of three overlapping fields, each with numerous flocks of wild turkeys gorging on a bonanza of grasshoppers. Woody mentioned that in this same field he had once seen 99 elk grazing.

Although elk are the hallmark species of this region, and some 70,000 visitors travel here each fall to experience the sights and sounds of the rutting bulls, other wildlife is also abundant. I spent the better part of a day on a pontoon boat watching wildlife on the 1,500-acre East Branch Clarion River Lake, an Army Corps of Engineers flood control project near Johnsonburg in Elk County. Along the 20 miles of shoreline I saw red-tailed hawks, a double-crested cormorant, a half-dozen great blue herons, Canada geese and belted kingfishers. We drifted by a postcard shot of a doe

with twin fawns browsing on grass near a shoreline windfall.

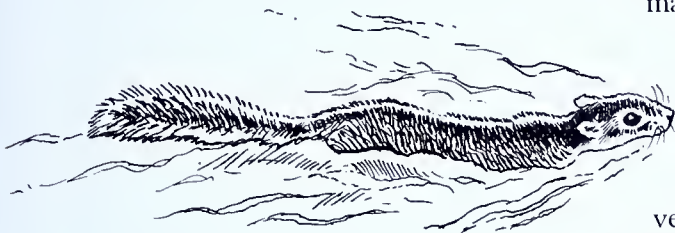
What I thought at first to be a branch with rust-colored leaves floating in the water, and what another passenger thought was a swimming snake, proved to be a red squirrel paddling wildly halfway across a 500-yard expanse of water. We pulled about for some pictures, just as the squirrel turned around and headed back to shore. We could see that the squirrel was tiring, but it might have found new energy had it known that the deep waters of the East Branch are also known for huge muskellunge.

We drifted closer, and the panic-stricken squirrel swam straight for the safety of the boat. He tried to climb aboard but couldn't get up the slick sides. We tried to scoop him up with my hat but he submerged each time. Finally, he found a resting place on a lip underneath the boat. We backed up to shore, and when we started the motor he rode a wave onto the rocks and scrambled into the woods. We were relieved to see the



squirrel make it to safety, but more relieved that we didn't have to give him mouth to mouth resuscitation.

IN NEARBY FOREST COUNTY I stopped at Tionesta to visit the site and look at the plans for the Hunting and Fishing Museum of Pennsylvania. The 27,000 square foot museum will be dedicated to preserving and interpreting the history of hunting, fishing and trapping in Pennsylvania, and will be built on a 35-acre island in the Allegheny River donated by local businessman Jack Sherman.



No site could be more appropriate or scenic. The surrounding hills that serve as a backdrop for the museum are rich in wildlife and history. Last November I hunted black bears not far upriver, and tracked a big bruin for miles in a snowstorm. Another highlight of that trip was watching a bald eagle each day coursing over the beautiful dark river, flying through the snow squalls.

Representative Jim Lynch conceived the idea for the museum in 1994, and since its inception the feasibility study has progressed through three phases of planning including both site and architectural master plans. This museum will be one of the most unique and handsome museums in the state, creatively designed to blend the outdoors with the indoors. Sportsmen will finally have a place where our long and unique outdoor heritage becomes visible through world-class interactive displays, collections, changing exhibits, and dynamic educational and cultural programs.

THE STORY OF elk country is rich and varied, and although much focus is on wildlife and wide open spaces, it would not be complete without mentioning people. No matter how wild or remote an area may be, every corner, indeed, every inch of our landscape has been touched in some way by the hand of man. The hands and hearts of the many people I talked to, both residents and visitors, truly



care about this region, and the majestic elk is the symbol of their pride. Each September Pennsylvania's Elk Outdoor Expo held on Winslow Hill will celebrate the elk, other wildlife and the great outdoors. It has been my experience that when caring people gather, good things happen, and a little northern exposure is one of the good things in Penn's Woods.



FIELD NOTES



Rare

When I noticed a small white bird gliding over some fields, my first thought was someone had let a parakeet out of its cage. On its next pass, however, I realized it was an all white tree swallow.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK



Halloween?

BUTLER/LAWRENCE — Deputy Ike Eisenbrown and I were manning a display at the county fair when a man approached and told us he was a vampire and needed some information about bats. Not long after, another fellow told Farm-Game manager Jeff Doran about giant condors that stand nearly four feet tall and fly around his house catching rabbits and squirrels. It's times like this when I'll admit we don't have all the answers.

— WCO RANDY W. PILARCIK, PORTERSVILLE

Returned to the Scene

VENANGO — Some say animals are creatures of habit, but recently we apprehended the brother of an offender we had cited for a similar violation in the same spot exactly one year earlier.

— WCO LEONARD C. HRIBAR, OIL CITY

Thanks for the Memories

My promotion to the Harrisburg headquarters happened so quickly that I didn't have time to thank all the people who made my 15 years in northern York County so special. I want to thank all the deputies in the county and WCOs Guy Hansen and Rodney Mee. I'm also thankful to the Hunter-Trapper Ed instructors, county sportsmen's clubs, conservation district folks, envirothon teachers, Fish and Boat Commission officers, police department officers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, DCNR and others. I would be remiss if I didn't mention Russ Whisler from the Northern York County Game and Fish Association, and Robert Hilker, president of the York County Federation of Sportsmen. These two guys are truly role models for those who care about conservation.

— GREG HOUGHTON, BUREAU OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, HARRISBURG

A Lot of Nerve

FOREST — Deputy Steve Hale watched a dove hunter exit his vehicle and walk across a farm lane to place a bag of trash in some standing corn owned by the farmer who had just given him permission to hunt. This occurred while Steve, in full uniform, stood in plain view. Needless to say, the hunter's wallet is a little lighter, and he lost a place to hunt.

— WCO RICHARD T. CRAMER, TIONESTA

Mind of Their Own

LYCOMING — I was planning to write a Field Note about a fellow officer who, while dealing with a nuisance bear, had fallen in the mud and had to drive home in his underwear, until I fell in the mud myself while removing a nuisance beaver. It seems Field Notes are bigger than all of us.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTAUSVILLE

Honest Mistake

TRAINING SCHOOL — At Hawk Mountain we were all focused on a broad-winged hawk heading straight toward us when one of my classmates said that it was heading away, because it was getting smaller in the binoculars. It was then he realized that he had been looking through the wrong end of his binoculars. Isn't that right, J.J.?

— TRAINEE RICKY A. DEITERICH, HARRISBURG

Cleaned Up

CLEARFIELD — I noticed an osprey fishing on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River right in Clearfield, and couldn't help but think that only 10 years or so ago there were no fish to catch because of polluted water.

— WCO DAVID A. CARLINI, CLEARFIELD

Didn't Read the Book

SULLIVAN — While doing a program at Worlds End State Park, I mentioned that bears usually stay clear of chained or penned dogs. As I pulled into my driveway later that evening, however, my headlights illuminated a large bear standing a mere 10 yards from my penned and frantic Chesapeake Bay retriever. The undaunted bruin was after an illegally killed deer that I had hanging. It dragged the deer 30 yards into the woods and refused to leave despite my shouting and the dog's incessant barking. In the future my bear programs will be slightly modified.

— WCO WILLIAM WILLIAMS, MUNCY VALLEY

Surprise Find

During the annual duck banding efforts at Middle Creek we banded mallards, black ducks, wood ducks and teal, but were surprised at the inadvertent capture of a young coyote. This is another example of wildlife diversity that results from properly managing good habitat. Remember, a healthy ecosystem will feature predatory species as well as prey.

— ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SPECIALIST BERT MYERS, MIDDLE CREEK WMA, KLEINFELTERSVILLE

Oops!

ERIE — Deputy Gerald Clabatz's 4-year-old son, Blake, asked if they could go deer spotting, and then said that he wanted to hold the light. When Gerald told his son that he should hold the light, the boy wanted to know if he could hold the gun. I'm not sure what Gerald's teaching that youngster, but I may need to keep an eye on things.

— WCO DARIN L. CLARK, ELGIN

Good Advice

DELAWARE — With the hunting seasons upon us, remember that wearing fluorescent orange is required by law. Refer to your hunting digest for guidelines. Against popular belief, the Game Commission does not require you to wear orange so we can find you. The orange is for your safety and the safety of others. By following these rules, you'll be able to head afield another day.

— DEPUTY BILL COSENZA, EDMONT



Still Not Legal

CUMBERLAND — Deputies John Lynch and Bob Alspaugh checked a dove hunter who asked if during the regular small game season he needed to wear an orange cap even though he had orange hair. John jokingly told him that only if his hair was fluorescent orange. The man removed his cap and, sure enough, he had hair about as fluorescent as orange can be.

— WCO EDWARD B. STEFFAN, NEWVILLE

Opportunities Galore

TRAINING SCHOOL — While on field assignment in Susquehanna County with WCO Don Burchell we saw an abundance of Canada geese, deer, turkeys, and even spotted a bear.

— TRAINEE JAMES P. MCCARTHY, HARRISBURG



Early Bird Catches the Worm

CLARION — Landowners who have nuisance beavers need to call their local WCOs now instead of waiting until after the trapping season. Each year I get calls after the season, and I know those dams didn't appear in March. Many local trappers contact me prior to each trapping season to ask about problem areas, and I'm more than happy to tell them where they can help.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Stuff Dreams are Made Of

TRAINING SCHOOL — WCO Dan Sitler and I were checking dove hunters when we noticed a little boy with one group dressed in camo from head to toe. When I asked him if he was helping his dad hunt, he got a smile from ear to ear and said that it was his fifth birthday, so he got to go hunting with Dad. The boy said he got a dove, and his father got all choked up and said his son retrieved the bird after it fell in a nearby field. Way to go, Dad! You made this youngster's day special.

— TRAINEE BETH A. FIFE, HARRISBURG

Meals on Wheels (or Tracks)

Game lands maintenance supervisor Bill May was using a bulldozer to create a new opening on the Elk State Forest when he noticed two coyotes crouched at the edge of the clearing, watching him, apparently waiting for the dozer to push mice their way.

— LMO COLLEEN M. SHANNON, GRAMPIAN

Back to Basics

LYCOMING — Since transferring here I've been busy finding a place to live and getting situated, but one day I helped neighboring WCO Jonathan Wyant trap nuisance beavers, picked up an injured owl, and trapped a troublesome bear. It was refreshing to spend a day dealing totally with wildlife.

— WCO HAROLD COLE, NORTHCENTRAL REGION

Quick Detective Work

MONROE — Officers John Bohrman and Chris Boheim of the Pocono Mountain Region Police responded to a call about an injured deer drowning in a lake behind a home. After determining that the deer was paralyzed and dispatching it, the officers noticed a bullet hole in its back. A necropsy was done and the bullet located, and faced with other evidence, the homeowner confessed to shooting the deer because it was eating his shrubs. Without these officers' hard work and perseverance, this crime could have easily gone undetected.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Which was Worse?

TRAINING SCHOOL — We were touring a mine reclamation site when the vehicle I was in lost its muffler. Undaunted, Land Management Supervisor Dennis Dusza handed out several packs of foam earplugs and wished us luck. The earplugs worked well, but conversation was difficult. Luckily, another trainee discovered that singing cut through the drone of the exhaust. Did I say luckily?

— TRAINEE CLINT J. DENIKER, HARRISBURG

Like Kids at Christmas

TRAINING SCHOOL — One of the most anticipated times each month at the training school is checking our mailboxes for *Game News*. We all immediately turn to the Field Note section to see who the month's "celebrities" are.

— TRAINEE CHAD R. EYLER, HARRISBURG

One Extreme to the Other

MERCER — Turkey broods were seen early and very late. One hunter told me he noticed poults on May 19, and Deputy Carl McAdams reported seeing a hen with four poults with "yellow fuzzy feathers" barely able to fly during the last week of August. The late broods are often due to re-nesting efforts of hens that had nests destroyed.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Improvised

WYOMING — For weeks Stacey Matiskella wondered why her birdbath was being knocked to the ground each morning, until she watched a doe tip it with her head so her twin fawns could lap the spilled water from the ground.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK



Priorities

TRAINING SCHOOL — I would rather process a bear that hasn't been tranquilized than get between a certain trainee and the last KitKat bar that got hung up in the candy machine.

— TRAINEE TIMOTHY L. WENRICH, HARRISBURG



It Wasn't Me

TRAINING SCHOOL — If anyone notices a large bear in Clearfield County with a bandage over its jaw, let it know that a trainee named Dan pulled its tooth.

— TRAINEE JASON L. DECOSKEY, HARRISBURG

Crossin' Over

Craig and Jean Greenlee were driving down a road that had a freshly painted double yellow centerline when they noticed a flock of turkeys trying to cross. The turkeys would approach the centerline with caution and then pace nervously back and forth, refusing to cross. This went on for several minutes until one mature hen finally jumped over the line. After a while the rest of the birds followed, and I had to chuckle, thinking that these birds evidently paid attention in Driver's Ed class.

— LMO JAMES E. DENIKER, SANDY LAKE

Pine/Richland-2, Geese-0

ALLEGHENY — I received a call about some nuisance geese at Pine/Richland High School's new stadium and sports complex. Expecting a large flock, I was relieved to see that only two domestic geese had taken up residence. My attempt to net the birds failed, however, so someone suggested we use the football players to catch the geese. Tight end Andy Moore volunteered, and after a short time he and some teammates caught both geese, which I relocated.

— WCO GARY M. FUJAK, CORAOPOLIS

Modern Technology

FULTON — I was in a sporting goods store when I overheard some fellows talking about a new 2.5 million candlepower spotlight. Just a few of the comments were: "That thing will vaporize the deer." "It will start a forest fire." "You'll have planes landing in the fields." And my favorite: "If it's accidentally shined on someone's house it'll blow out the windows."

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE

What's Next?

BRADFORD — Thirty-four years ago I was issued a manual typewriter to do reports. After 20 years I finally felt comfortable using it, but then I was issued an electric typewriter that seemed to type by itself every time I touched a key. Now I have a computer that flashes messages such as, "Do you want to delete this program?" Although this new computer is supposed to be faster, it now takes most of the day to do monthly reports.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Times Have Changed

I was reading a *Game News* from 1931 when I came upon this interesting passage. "Mr. James K. Davis, White Horse Road, Paoli, reports a full grown doe being seen behind his home recently. Apparently, the deer are slowly but surely extending their range into the more open country of the southeast."

— LMO SCOTT R. BILLS, HALIFAX

Too Good to Be True

TRAINING SCHOOL — WCO Mark Rutkowski and I were checking goose hunters in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area when we noticed a fisher cross the road, and then, seconds later, another one crossed. WCO Rutkowski asked me what I just saw, and thinking it was some kind of trick question, I hesitated to answer. My training WCO reaffirmed that they were, indeed, fishers.

— TRAINEE KRISTOFFER A. KREBS, HARRISBURG

Had the Range

DAUPHIN — Deputies Bob Schmitt and Larry Mummert were attending an "oldies" concert when a flock of Canada geese passed overhead and dropped some special packages. "I'm glad cows don't fly," the lead singer said after the bombing raid.

— WCO MARK FAIR, MIDDLETOWN



No, Not That

BEDFORD — Deputies Bob Sabo and Tom Shippey went to a retirement home to remove a skunk that had taken up residence near an air conditioning unit. Bob was trying to nudge the skunk out from under the unit while Tom was holding a crate, while many residents and nurses looked on. One nurse told Bob that if he got sprayed by the skunk he would need a sponge bath. Onlookers said that Bob turned red and handled the skunk with kid gloves, while Tom stood back and tossed pebbles in the skunk's direction.

— WCO JIM TROMBETTO, NEW ENTERPRISE

Same Everywhere

BRADFORD — I was out West last fall when I met Colorado conservation officer Jim Haskins. We talked about wildlife issues and particularly one thing common to both states: road hunting. We compared ways that we deal with this problem, and we both agreed that we rely on sportsmen in reporting this activity.

— WCO VERNON PERRY III, MONROETON

Bear Season, Nov. 19-21

BEAR SEASON this year runs from Monday, November 19, through Wednesday, November 21. Every hunter who gets a bear must within 24 hours take it, along with his hunting license and bear hunting license, to an official Game Commission bear check station.

Check the following list for specific locations. Unless noted otherwise, check stations will be open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. during the 3-day season. After 9 p.m. on November 21, hunters with bears that need to be checked should contact the appropriate region office.

Last year hunters took 3,075 bears,

a state record that shattered the old record of 2,598 set in 1998, and was almost double 1999's harvest of 1,740.

Bear hunters must wear a minimum of 250 square inches of fluorescent orange material on the head, chest and back. They must possess a regular hunting license and a bear license to participate in the season. The bear license must be in the hunter's possession while afield, but need not be displayed.

Bear hunters may not use scents or lures. In addition, hunters are reminded they cannot hunt in areas where bait or food has been placed within the past 30 days.

Bear check stations

Northwest Region

- Forest County
Marienville Volunteer Fire Company, 106 N. Forest St., (one block west of Route 6) Marienville
- Jefferson County
SGL 244, south from Exit 15, I-80 and just off Rt. 205, Reynoldsville
- Venango County
Northwest Region Office, 1509 Pittsburgh Rd., Franklin
- Warren County
SGL 309, Rt. 127, 2 miles south of Tidioute

Northcentral Region

- Cameron County
Sinnemahoning, Intersection of Rts. 120 & 872

- Centre County
Penn Nursery, Rt. 322 near Pottery Mills
- Clearfield County
S. B. Elliott State Park, Rt. 153 north of I-80, Exit 18
- Clinton County
Renovo Forestry Bldg.
Rt. 120, 2 miles west of Renovo
- Lycoming County
Antes Fort Fire Hall, 1/4-mile south of Northcentral Region Office on Rt. 44; and at Trout Run Fire Hall, Rt. 14.
- McKean County
SGL 62 Bldg., 3 miles north of Mt. Jewett on Ornsby Rd.

- Tioga County
SGL 208 Bldg., 3 miles north of
Gaines on Rt. 349
- Union County
Bald Eagle St. Forest Headquarters
Rt. 45 just west of Rt. 235
Northeast Region
- Bradford County
Monroeton Rod and Gun Club,
(Monday only) off Rt. 220 on
Township Road 402 between
Kellogg and South Branch
- Carbon County
Beltzville State Park Maintenance
Bldg., 2950 Pohopoco Dr., just east
of Exit 34 Pa Turnpike Northeast
Extension
- Luzerne County
Northeast Region Office, Int. of
Rts. 415 & 118, Dallas
- Monroe County
SGL 127 Bldg., Rt. 423, 2 miles
south of Tobyhanna
- Pike County
SGL 180, Shohola Building, Rt. 6
at Shohola Falls, 13 miles south of
Hawley
- Sullivan County
State Forestry Bldg., Rt. 87, 1.5
miles south of Hillsgrove
Southwest Region
- Indiana County
Yellow Creek State Park, off Rt.
422, Indiana
- Westmoreland County
Southwest Region Office, 339 W.
Main St., Ligonier
Southcentral Region
- Fulton County
Buchanan State Forest Bldg, 4
miles east of Breezewood on north
side of U.S. Rt. 30.
- Huntingdon County
Southcentral Region Office, Rt.
22, 1.1 miles west of Huntingdon
Southeast Region
- Berks County
Southeast Region Office, 448
Snyder Rd. 7 miles north of Read-
ing
- Dauphin County
PGC Headquarters, 2001
Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg

Concurrent Deer Seasons, November 26 - December 8

WHEN THIS YEAR'S regular fire-arms deer season opens Monday, November 26, hunters — properly licensed — will be allowed to take both antlered and antlerless deer. Not since the mid-1940s have the antlered and antlerless seasons been held concurrently, and back then, the antlerless seasons were not statewide.

This year's liberalized antlerless deer season is the Game Commission's latest step towards balancing the deer population with habitat. The concurrent season structure has obviously appealed to hunters, too, as antlerless

deer licenses sales ran way ahead of what they have in past years, when the antlerless season followed the buck season.

Hunters must wear at least 250 square inches of fluorescent orange material on the head, chest and back combined at all times while afield. They are also advised that it's illegal to hunt within 150 yards of any occupied building without the occupant's permission.

The legal definition of an antlered deer is one with two or more points to an antler, or a spike three or more

inches long.

Before taking a second or any subsequent deer, a hunter must first tag the first or any prior deer taken. Tags must remain attached to the deer and remain attached until the carcass is

processed for consumption or mounting. Within 10 days, hunters must report deer harvests to the Game Commission in Harrisburg, using the report card supplied with each hunting license.

Big game award winners honored

THE SIX HUNTERS who had the top-scoring white-tailed bucks and black bears measured during the 2001 Big Game Scoring Sessions held earlier this year were honored this past September, at the fall meeting of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association (POWA). Of the six honored, two established new state records.

The award winners, by category, are:

Typical White-tailed Deer harvested with firearm: Ronald J. LaBrosse Jr., of McMurray, harvested a typical antlered deer that scored 172-6. He took the deer in Washington County in 1996.

Nontypical White-tailed Deer harvested with firearm: Garry Forgy, of McVeytown, harvested a nontypical antlered deer that scored 197-3. He took the deer in Mifflin County in 2000.

Typical White-tailed Deer harvested with a bow and arrow: Albert J. Muntz, of Havertown, harvested a

typical deer that scored 174-7. He took the deer in Bucks County in 1995. This deer is a new state record, breaking a record that stood for 15 years.

Nontypical White-tailed Deer harvested with a bow and arrow: Eugene W. Livingston, of Boswell, harvested a nontypical buck that scored 195-0. He took the deer in Westmoreland County in 1995.

Black Bear harvested with a firearm: Joseph E. Mindick, of Warrington, harvested a bear that scored 22-13. He took the bear in Luzerne County in 1998. This bear is a new state record.

Black Bear harvested with a bow and arrow: Richard Fingado, of St. Marys, harvested a bear that scored 19-5. He took the bear in Elk County in 2000. This bear ranks second in Pennsylvania's All-Time Big Game Records for this category.

Since 1965, the Game Commission has periodically held scoring ses-

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

sions for trophy deer and bear harvested in Pennsylvania, as a service to hunters and to expand our database of information on Pennsylvania deer and bear. This was the agency's 13th measuring session, the first since 1995.

During the press conference prior to the awards banquet, it was an-

nounced that elk will be added to the Game Commission's big game trophy records. Minimum scores for elk are typical gun - 300; typical archery - 200; nontypical gun - 325; and nontypical archery - 275.

The complete results of the 2001 scoring program will be featured in the February *Game News*.

2001-02 bobcat permits drawn

ON SEPTEMBER 14, with assistance from several interested observers, the Game Commission drew the names of 520 individuals who will be awarded bobcat permits for the 2001-02 hunting and trapping season. The drawing was held in the agency's Harrisburg headquarters.

Upon review of the 3,048 applications received, the Game Commission disqualified 156 individuals for failing to follow instructions, including mailing in multiple applications. Of the 2,892 eligible applicants, an

additional 50 were drawn as alternates, in case any of the first 520 individuals are declared ineligible during further review by the Bureau of Law Enforcement.

Those selected received a permit entitling them to either hunt or trap one bobcat. The hunting season opened October 13 and runs through February 23, 2002. The trapping season opened October 14 and runs through February 23. Bobcats may be taken only in Furbearer Management Zones 2 and 3.



SHAWN HARSHAW, Cambria County WCO, is this year's recipient of the Northeast Conservation Law Enforcement Chief's Association's Officer of the Year award. A 1993 graduate of the Ross Leffler School of Conservation, Harshaw successfully prosecuted a large number of cases involving littering and other regulations designed to protect state game lands and other lands open to public hunting. With Shawn are Southwest Region Director Harry Richards, left, and PGC Deputy Executive Director Howard Harshaw.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

Those of a century and more ago, who hunted and trapped the deer, the turkey, the beaver and others to near extermination, damaged their own future and our present. They didn't see it that way at the time, though.

Forgiveness

IM THANKFUL that we have a holiday honoring the virtue of being thankful. Taking time to appreciate, to not only stop and smell the roses, but to also say "Thanks" to the one who planted them, is a good and sweet thing.

It's just a shame we have no holiday promoting forgiveness.

That may be because it's easier to give thanks where it's due to than to forgive where it may not be deserved. But harboring grudges and resentment is an acid gnawing at your belly. It's no wonder that those charged with ministering to our psychological well-being often recommend that we forgive. To forget is, of course, impossible, but we are told we should forgive those who, deliberately or accidentally, have hurt us. We'll sleep better for it, they say, and I suppose they're right.

A person doesn't go through much of life without a lot of the poet's "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" thrown his way. Sometimes those shafts are aimed; many times they are thrown carelessly and anonymously. The originator of the injury may not even know he's let anything harmful loose. The wounds may be personal or you may share them with others. Healing

the hurt is helped by forgiveness, say the wise. To not forgive is to provide another place for the hurt to fester, in the heart.

In my years of hunting, I've been hurt a few times, not physically, but still inside me. I can say that none of it was done maliciously by someone who knows me, so the

Bob Steiner



ONE HUNTER who walked in on me, saw me on stand, but didn't move away. He got a shot at a buck before me. I forgive him.

wound was not as bad as it could have been if inflicted by a friend. Perhaps I've been lucky in my choice of companions and relations, and for that, as this month's holiday celebrates, I am thankful.

One hurt I have endured was inflicted by strangers who had read my articles about hunting and wrote to denounce and insult me for enjoying and supporting the activity. Then, again, this attack wasn't really toward me, the flesh-and-blood person that those people have never

met, but at the byline on a column that reads, "Linda Steiner." It could have been another name and they would have been just as nasty.

I could have been angry with the anti-hunting letter writers, and maybe I was for a while. I was more shocked than anything by their excess of emotion, bordering on threat. I was sorry that some people were like that, although I should have known they could be. I had never before had it directed at me, though. I admit I don't understand them, and I hope their vehemence was born out of a true, although misdirected, concern for wildlife.

I forgive them.

I have to forgive, too, my fellow hunters who have hurt me. Like the one who walked in on me, saw me on stand, but didn't move away. He leaned against a tree, showing me his back, and ignored my loud "Ahems." He got, as he must have wanted, the shot at the buck before it could get to me, although in his haste to "beat me," he missed. Disgusted by all that, I left.

By every rule of sportsman's courtesy, he should have found another spot to hunt when he saw I was already in that one. The practice ensures that all of us have a good hunt, by not spoiling each other's chances. Maybe he didn't intend to be mean. Maybe no one had ever taught him what a true sportsman is supposed to do in a situation

like that. Maybe he had never been around a sportsman. So, I was one, at least, that he has encountered.

I forgive him.

I'm thankful for all the wildlife we have in the state today, and grateful for those, including so many past and present in the Pennsylvania Game Commission, who helped make sure we do. I'm aware that it has not always been like that, of how far back from the edge of oblivion so many animals have come, even in my own lifetime.

Those of a century and more ago, who hunted and trapped the deer, the grouse, the turkey, the bear, the beaver and others to near extermination, damaged their own future and my present. They didn't see it that way at the time, I'm sure, or recognized the

threat only as the seemingly endless numbers of game became countable in their scarcity. Giveaways of venison as a free lunch at New York taverns was just one of the profligate uses, as was the fastening of wild bird wings and plumes on fashionable hats. The forests of that time were slaughtered as much as the game, without thought to whether anything would grow back.

That era is gone and unrecoverable, to mourn but never to have again. Whatever mistakes those market hunters and timber barons made, they were made and we have to let it go. Someday we may need someone to let us rest easier in our graves, for our sins.

I forgive them.

Harder to forgive are those who took the last of the last, so there can never be any more. For some extinctions there is a name known, an identifiable individual, who killed off the species, to live afterward in history, even infamy — names like Jon Brandsson, Sigourour Isleffson and Ketil Ketilsson.

*Whatever mistakes
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The penguin-like great auk might have been a seabird I could have seen in travels along the North Atlantic coast, had not those three killed the last two auks and broken the species' final egg off Iceland in 1844. I suppose it was not as an act of cruelty for the men, but just a getting of what had always been there to be gotten before, and what they had always deserved to get.

That was the morality of the time and society's acceptable outlook on life, a belief that Nature should serve Man whatever it cost her, whatever the longtime price to him. Charitably, the uncontrolled taking of wildlife numbers had gone on for so many years that those people who finished off the auk and other species, like the eastern wapiti, heath hen and passenger pigeon, were just pawns who happened to be around at endgame.

I forgive them.

Centuries of ignorance, followed by heedlessness, brought extinction to some wildlife; enlightenment and action through game laws and wildlife management saved many more. Yet I'm still being wounded in spirit today as a hunter, a person who appreciates wildlife and natural places.

A wooded plot of land I drive by often,



Bob D'Angelo

MUCH WILD LAND has been encroached upon by "progress" — no-weed, no-pest, tamed suburban lawns.

that I have hunted and hiked, where I know the bluebird nests in the broken down apple tree, the turkey feeds under the beech, and the deer spies from the shadows, was cleared flat one day. A sign went up that read, "Available - Will Build to Suit." Zoned Commercial, Industrial, Residential, it hardly matters. The wild land that was life and gave life will be soon be smothered under slabs of concrete and asphalt, or depressed by the load of concrete and girders. Or it will be perverted by someone's dollhouse idea of a no-weed, no-pest, tamed suburban lawn, where woodchucks will never be welcome.

Someone else, a long time ago, forgave those who hurt Him deeply. He asked for forgiveness for them, for they knew not what they did. I'll try to do as much and forgive even these who take away the wildlife by killing the land.

And try to educate them. □

COVER PAINTING BY SUSAN BANKEY YODER

WHAT'S MORE COLORFUL than a ring-necked pheasant against a background of snow and amber waves of foxtail shimmering in an autumn breeze? This month's cover — "Foxtail Pheasants" — is the 2002 Working Together for Wildlife fine art print. As in past years, a limited edition of 600 prints is available. Prints are on acid-free paper, image is 15 x 22½ inches. Cost is \$125, plus \$7.50 s&h (for framing add \$97.50, plus \$15 s&h). PA residents add 6% state sales tax. Embroidered patches featuring a ring-necked pheasant will be available soon, for \$4.71 each plus tax. The WTFW program was launched in 1979 to provide a way for nonhunters — and hunters, too — to contribute to the management of birds and mammals known collectively as nongame.

Certain smells can decrease stress and increase alertness, and what works best for Marcia is walking in an autumn woods on a wet day just after the leaves have fallen.

Scents and Sensibility

IT'S EARLY AUTUMN, 40 years ago, and I'm sitting behind my boyfriend on his motor scooter. We bump along a dirt road winding through the mountains of central Pennsylvania.

"Stop!" I yell.

The scooter slides to a halt.

"I smell New Jersey tea," I say as I hop off and rush through the shrubby mountaintop understory.

My boyfriend follows more slowly, a bemused smile on his face. I quickly sniff down my quarry, break some fern-like leaves off a small shrub, crush them, and inhale appreciatively.

"Smell this," I tell him. "Isn't it wonderful?"

"I can barely smell it," he answers.

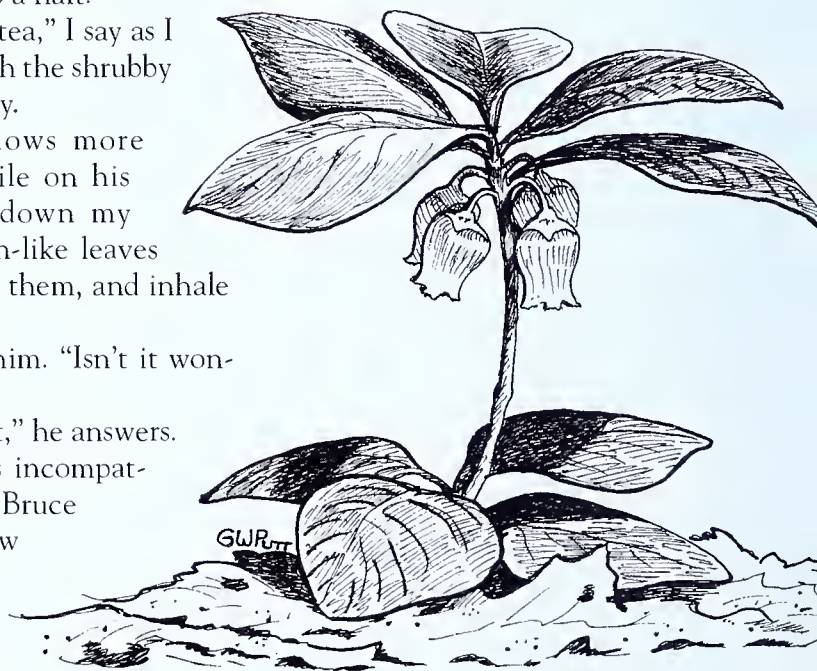
Despite our obvious incompatibility, we marry, and Bruce still tells the story of how I tracked down New Jersey tea by using my nose.

"Only it wasn't New Jersey tea," I remind him.

What my dad had always called New Jersey tea turned

out to be the aromatic shrub sweetfern that forms low, mat-like thickets on dry, sandy, sterile soils.

Forty years later, in early November, Bruce and I walk through our forest, which



Teaberry

is infused with the fruity scent of witch hazel blossoms.

"Isn't that a wonderful odor?" I ask him.

"I can barely smell it," he answers.

Some things never change. After 40 years, I should know better. Apparently my olfactory area, in the upper end of each nostril, is a much deeper yellow than Bruce's, because the deeper the yellow, the keener the sense of smell. Furthermore, because the sense of smell is emotional rather than intellectual and more intuitive than logical, my intellectual, logical husband should expect to have a duller nose than his emotional, intuitive wife. No matter. We both have only five million olfactory cells, compared to a sheepdog's 220 million. Yet, with a little practice, humans can learn to discriminate between hundreds of different odors.

Back in 1752, the great Swedish taxonomist, Karl Linnaeus, in his *Odores medicamentor*, divided odors into seven classes: fragrant, goaty, ambrosial, foul, nauseating, aromatic and garlicky. But one person's "fragrant" is another's "ambrosial" as writers who try to describe how something smells have discovered.

Perfume makers have their own descriptive terms for scents. In one survey they claimed to have discovered what scents appeal to women based on their hair color. Blonde women like fresh, stimulating odors, such as mimosa and hawthorn. Redheads prefer exciting smells such as orange blossom and honeysuckle. Raven-haired women choose the sultry odors of orchids and magnolias.

Then, there are brunettes — like I used to be before my hair turned gray. We love every fragrance from "soothing" lavender

to "intoxicating" violet, which explains why, when I am outside, I'm led around by my nose. Like the Andaman Islanders in the Bay of Bengal east of India, odor marks the passage of time for me. They name the seasons of the year after fragrant flowers in bloom at the time. This calendar of scents reminds me of my own yearly ritual of tracking down old, familiar odors and discovering new ones.

"Ah, those fugacious universal fragrances of the meadows and woods," Henry David Thoreau wrote in his journal. "How much excited we are, how much recruited, by a great many particular fragrances." Which is why, in early spring, I sniff along the trails like a bloodhound, happy that the long, almost scentless months of winter are over. No odor is more ambrosial to me than a

thawing earth.

On an early April day, I kneel on the wet, mossy trails, almost prostrate like a religious petitioner, and inhale the faint, fragrant odor of trailing arbutus, or walk down the hollow road to smell the tiny, yellow blossoms of common spicebush. Also called "wild allspice," its blossoms, twigs and bright red fruits are redolent of the spices Columbus sought when he accidentally discovered the New World. Later, pioneers dried its fruits and used them as a substitute for allspice.

Odor is known to evoke memories. "Smells are surer than sights or sounds to make your heartstrings crack," Rudyard Kipling once wrote, and which is the reason I rush to smell the first opening daffodil. I'm a small child again who, entranced by the yellow flowers, has picked all the daffodils but one in our yard. Or the young

We have only five million olfactory cells, compared to a sheepdog's 220 million. Yet, with a little practice, humans can learn to discriminate between hundreds of different odors.

girl who dreamed of getting married in a church smothered in daffodils.

The smell of peonies is even more poignant to me, evoking happy memories of Memorial Day in Mahanoy City. Early in the morning, my grandmother cut huge bouquets of peonies from her yard in Pottstown, put them in containers of water, and packed them carefully in the trunk of our pale green 1940 Oldsmobile. Then my parents, my grandparents, my three siblings and I squeezed into our car and traveled to the "coal regions."

The graveyard was on a mountaintop above the city, Protestants on one side, Catholics on the other. It was always cool in the mountains, the air crisper and brighter. To a child from the flatlands of southern New Jersey, those mountains seemed stupendous.

Later, we had a splendid dinner at my great-aunt Mary's house, which included homemade bread, cut thickly and spread with strawberry jam. Other cousins of my dad's crowded into Aunt Mary's small row house, and if we had time, we would drive up to "The Vulcan" above the city where my dad had been born on a snowy night in January and where some of his uncles and cousins still lived.

Except for my 87-year-old dad, all the elders are gone now, and yet, when I smell peonies, I see and hear them clearly. Smell, as Helen Keller once wrote, is indeed, "a potent wizard that transports us across thousands of miles and all the years we have lived."

Here on our mountain I have lived for

30 years, making a study of natural odors. One thing I've noticed is that certain kinds of odors seem to repeat themselves in unrelated plants. One is wintergreen, chemically known as methyl salicylate. Both the twigs and bark of black and yellow birches smell and taste of wintergreen. So do the leaves and red berries of the small, evergreen plant known as teaberry, checkerberry or wintergreen.

Another repetitive natural scent is that of anise or licorice, which I can smell faintly in the crushed, fern-like leaves of the dainty, spring wildflower sweet cicely, although the roots are apparently more strongly scented.

One of the goldenrods, sweet goldenrod (*Solidago odora*), is primarily identified by the anise-like odor of its crushed leaves.

I am particularly fond of many members of the mint family, each of which has a different odor. Native mints include such wonderfully aromatic plants as American pennyroyal, the lemon-scented horse-balm, and the "knock-your-socks-off" mountain-mints. Then there are the mints brought over from Europe that have gone wild, such as spearmint, peppermint, gill-over-the-ground or ground ivy, and catnip. As an added bonus, the leaves of all of these mints, except horse-balm, can be used to make tea.

In May and June I go from one giddy scent to another as first the air is permeated with apple blossoms, then lilacs, then wild azaleas, then dame's rocket, all of



Sweet Cicely

which are wholly pleasing odors. The acrid, cloying smell of blossoming wild black cherry trees in late May overpowers all other scents in the forest, while the fruity odor of hay-scented ferns wafts from the powerline right-of-way.

The catlapa tree flowers in June have a cloying odor similar to black cherry flowers, but the sweet scent of blossoming wild grapes is pure heaven.

Then there are the roses, both the native pasture rose and the alien multiflora rose. For days the air is saturated with the scent of roses drifting up from the valley where whole pastures have been taken over by multiflora rose bushes. Although farmers hate them, those of us obsessed by roses — as the Romans were said to be — appreciate the rose-scented breezes of early June.

Even the hot, humid days of summer that spawn thundershowers are ambrosial to my nose. I stand outside before a storm begins, sniff the air, and say, "It smells like rain." I learned only recently, from Jerry Dennis's delightful book *It's Raining Frogs and Fishes*, that I'm actually smelling oils "given off by plants and absorbed in the soil, where they blend with earthy odors. The oils and the odors," Dennis says, "are released into the air when the relative humidity at ground level increases to more than 80 percent. Because humid air transmits odors more readily than dry air, we

are made more receptive than usual to the heady, musky scent of the air."

Another writer, Gilbert Klingel, author of *Inagua: An Island Sojourn*, who was camped out on a remote Caribbean island, was so intrigued by a strong, pungent odor close to the ground, reminiscent of locust flowers, that he crawled in the moonlight in search of the smell. On the way he encountered a host of other odors, the "rich hay smell of beach grass, the dry parched aroma of sun-caked earth, the musty reek of dead leaves and rotten wood." After an overwhelming olfactory experience "hundreds of . . . strange perfumes that I did not know existed," he traced the original smell to a "stunted tree from which hung thousands of tiny blossoms."

While I have not yet crawled on the ground in search of a strange scent, I do discover new ones every year. My latest were the ripened-apple scent of crushed mayapple blossoms and the faint, sweet odor emitted by an entire blackberry shrub.

Certain smells can decrease stress and increase alertness, according to researchers at Yale's Psychophysiology Center, and the New Age practice of aromatherapy apparently works for many sick people. What works best for me is walking in an autumn woods on a wet day just after the leaves have fallen. Is there any scent that relieves stress and evokes more happy memories than that? □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Full Season: A Deer Hunter's Story, by Dave Drakula, Full Seasons Press, HC 3 Box 2, Emporium, PA 15834, 225 pp., \$17.95 plus \$2.50 shipping & handling, PA residents add 6 percent state sales tax. By a former Pennsylvania Game Commissioner, this book is a hunting memoir, a story of one man's longing for the deer woods and what they ultimately mean to him and all those who consider themselves deer hunters. It captures the changes that have occurred in a hunter's lifetime, changes in the land and in the man. *Full Season* explores what deer hunting means to us, how it relates to our place in today's world, and how living and hunting deer in Pennsylvania's big woods grasps the essence of a way of life.

Ideally, your deer drops within sight after the shot. Realistically, though, most likely you'll have a tracking job ahead of you. Here are some tips for . . .

Minimizing Deer Loss



INTERPRETING sign immediately after the shot may indicate how difficult of a tracking job you'll have.

ABOUT a dozen years ago, sometime during the first week of the regular firearms season, a buck with a perfect 8-point rack lay dead at my feet. It was a beautiful animal, but I didn't kill it. Someone had shot the deer several days earlier and failed to follow up the shot. I found the buck at the edge of a field of tall grass, just short of the escape cover it was seeking. The buck had been shot just behind the shoulder. Standing over the frozen,

snow-covered carcass, I tried to imagine why no one claimed such a fine deer. The only conclusion I could draw was that someone took a long shot, and probably figured it was a miss when the buck failed to drop immediately. Whatever, a magnificent animal was wasted and a hunter had only a sad story to tell.

Besides hunting safely, minimizing deer loss is the most significant obligation a hunter faces. Ethics demand hunters follow up on every shot by trailing and tracking the animal, finding it and, finally, bringing it home to be used properly. Fortunately, most sportsmen are committed to this task and most deer are recovered.

Being a bowhunter, I've learned there are things I can do to ensure any deer I hit will be recovered. When conscientiously followed, these techniques allow losses to be minimized and recovery rates to be maximized. Taking ethical shots, using and being proficient with proper equipment, and being at least minimally skilled in tracking and trailing techniques are ways hunters can reduce deer loss.

Most bowhunters I know wouldn't think of beginning the season with defective or untested equipment. Long before the season opens, bows are tuned, strings are re-



placed, axles on compound bows are lubricated, and broadheads are properly installed on arrow shafts. These hunters know that good arrow penetration by a razor sharp broadhead will leave a good blood trail and will quickly and humanely bring down a whitetail.

Unlike a bullet that kills by shock, a broadhead kills by severing vital arteries and veins so that the animal experiences massive cardiac or pulmonary failure. When oxygen is prevented from reaching a deer's brain, a swift and painless death follows. The hunter's task, then, is to deliver a surgically sharp, sturdy broadhead into a deer's vital area to ensure the animal will be recovered with a minimum of tracking.

To achieve this goal a hunter must be proficient with his equipment, and practice is the only way to develop this skill. Fortunately, there are archery clubs, pro shops, and even inexpensive backyard targets where (if local law allows) shooting can be done. Many clubs and pro shops have 3-D targets where hunters can practice taking shots under realistic field conditions. Just as important, they can safely practice with broadheads on appropriate

THERE ARE TWO schools of thought as to whether it is better to have an arrow remain in the animal or pass completely through. The author prefers to have an arrow pass completely through, so there's more of a blood trail.

targets. Luckily, most bowhunters find that practice is fun, especially if two or more people shoot together.

Some archery pro shops have interactive video systems where archers can shoot at life-like targets projected on a screen. The system depicts realistic hunting situations, simultaneously recording hits and keeping score. Interactive video, where available, is an effective and fun way to practice for hunting season.

Once a hunter develops a proficiency in shooting target arrows, the next step is to ensure the whole system of shooter and tackle delivers a broadhead to the point of aim. This may seem like a simple feat, but it can be tricky. The arrow must fly true and the broadhead must be designed so as not to plane in flight.

Years ago, when there were not as many heads to choose from, shooting at a deer was sometimes a questionable endeavor. Even though the broadheads were lethal, some planed badly and often did not strike where they were aimed. This sometimes resulted in arduous hours of trailing and some lost deer. Today, there are many designs of broadheads that feature razor sharp blades and are aerodynamically designed to fly without planing.

To ensure a well-placed shot, and assuming the arrows are properly spined for the weight of the bow, select the finest available broadhead with open blades. I prefer heads with three blades, such as the 125-grain Thunderhead, because 3-headed blades seem easier to tune. For a novice bowhunter, a good idea is to ask several experienced hunters which broadheads they prefer, because most heads on the market today are engineered to fly accurately. Most bowhunters prefer specific heads for good reason. It makes sense to

ask for suggestions.

Before they are ready for hunting, arrows and broadheads must be fine-tuned to ensure the combination flies to the point of aim. Once installed on the shaft, spin each arrow and broadhead combination on a hard surface to ensure there is no wobble. If you are using aluminum arrows and a wobble is detected, remove the broadhead and heat the tip of the arrow with an alcohol lamp to melt the ferrule cement. When the cement is fluid, remove and reinstall the insert. After the insert is removed and re-positioned, reinstall the broadhead and give the arrow the spin test one more time.

A candle will work just as well for this task but will leave a sooty deposit on the arrow shaft. It is not advisable to use a propane soldering torch because too much heat could ruin the shaft. Some hunters I know test each arrow and broadhead combination by shooting it into foam targets. I personally don't think that's necessary if the arrow passes the spin test and the archer has been regularly practicing with the same brand and weight broadheads. When a half dozen arrows and broadheads pass inspection, I place them in my bow quiver and designate them for hunting.

There are two schools of thought as to whether it is better to have an arrow re-

main in the animal or pass completely through. My objective is to have the arrow pass completely through, leaving an entrance and an exit hole from which blood can flow. Because there is more blood to follow, trailing becomes easier and the deer can usually be recovered in short order.

If using good equipment is important, then using it properly and ethically is even more so. Taking a shot at a deer is not nearly as important as taking the right shot at the right time. Ethical bowhunters would rather come home empty-handed than take a shot where there's even a marginal chance the broadhead might miss vital organs.

Shooting is an individual decision, but certain considerations must be kept in mind to ensure a mortal hit. Each hunter should know his limitations with his equipment, and avoid shots outside his zone of competence. Long shots, even when taken at unsuspecting game, often result in wounded and, most likely, lost animals. The same is true for shots at moving game, because the percentage of a clean kill is low.

In my opinion, the only time to shoot is when the animal is quartering away from the hunter. An arrow entering from the rear and traveling forward through a deer will almost always hit vital organs. If the animal is hit high and towards the rear, the kidneys may be hit. If struck in the center of the body, the broadhead may pass through the liver and/or lungs. If the arrow strikes low, there is an excellent chance the heart will be struck.

On the other hand, if the deer is facing the hunter, it is highly likely



WHEN TRACKING, it's necessary to observe things such as the shade of the blood color, blood droplet patterns, and the type of hair cut by the broadhead. Together they give the tracker vital clues as to the nature of the wound, and possibly which organs have been struck.

all these organs may be missed, and the animal will be gut shot. I don't even take broadside shots for this reason. To avoid a lost deer, do not shoot at an animal in a questionable position.

Once a shot is taken, it becomes imperative to spend as much time as needed to find it. This may mean tracking wounded game for hours or until legal shooting time ends, and possibly returning the next morning to finish the tracking job. The search must be exhaustive and should be called off only when the animal is found or when there is proof that the animal is not mortally wounded.

Tracking wounded deer requires the hunter to have knowledge of basic trailing techniques and some experience in the process. The best way to gain this experience is to actually help trail a wounded animal. However, a hunter simply following a blood trail may never become proficient in trailing skills unless he pays close attention to details. When tracking, it's necessary to observe things such as the shade of the blood color, blood droplet patterns, and the type of hair cut by the broadhead. Together they give the tracker vital clues as to the nature of the wound, and possibly which organs have been struck.

For example, a fine spray of blood is indicative of a lung hit, and tracking can begin immediately after the blood trail is established. An animal hit in the lungs may quickly run out of sight but will not go far, usually less than 50 yards.

A deer hit in the liver may jump or hunch its back, and then run a short distance before standing still. It may give little indication of being hit, although it may drop its head and stand with its tail down. If undisturbed, the animal will eventually walk off and then lie down a short distance from where it was hit. The blood pattern from a liver hit may be profuse at first, eventually tapering off to smaller and smaller drops. If there is evidence of a liver hit, shown by the reaction of the animal

to the shot, I wait at least an hour before beginning to trail it. If I arouse the deer from its bed while tracking, I wait an additional hour or two before taking up the trail again.

When trailing wounded deer, it's a good idea to study the color and pattern of the blood sign. When a deer is moving, the blood droplets from the wound may indicate which direction the animal is headed. Blood splashes forward as a deer moves and appears bright red if an artery is severed. If the blood is dark, then it is likely a vein has been cut or a major organ such as the liver has been hit.

After the deer is recovered and the carcass is opened for field-dressing, it should be noted which organ or organs caused the bleeding. There is much information to be gained by comparing the blood pattern on the ground to the organs struck by the broadhead. This knowledge may then be used to unravel difficult blood trails in the future.

Hunters, bowhunters in particular, are often held under close scrutiny by the general public. In fact, many gun hunters are critical of perceived deer losses by bowhunters. The truth is, crippling losses occur by both bow and gun hunters, but studies show that the number of deer lost by archers is far lower than originally believed.

Recent studies conducted by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, at a 53,000-acre military reservation, concluded that most bowhunters demonstrated "a great deal of skill, patience and concern about making quick, clean kills." The study showed that wounding rates for deer were substantially lower than expected.

No one wants to lose a deer, especially after all the practice, scouting and effort it took to get the shot. Doggedly trailing and tracking a wounded deer is the single most important responsibility a hunter has after the shot. If taken seriously, deer losses will be minimized. Anything less is unconscionable. □

The Shooters' Corner

By Don Lewis

Plenty of wildcats have been produced from the .284, but this one might be the best of the lot. It's a super long-range varmint cartridge.

6mm-.284

"THAT CHUCK is 286 yards from here," Jim said while studying the reading in his Bushnell compact laser rangefinder. "I have your new wildcat sighted in for about 275 yards, so Helen can hold dead on."

"It's your turn to shoot, Jim," Helen said. "I had the honor of dropping the first chuck with the new rig, but it was only a short 168-yard shot."

Jim lost no time in getting his Peightal Shooting Stool set up. He cradled the wildcat in the double V forks, aligned the 8-25x scope and reached for a cartridge.

When the wildcat's 70-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip bullet split the evening air, a resounding *thromp* floated back.

"It's still there, Jim. You must've hit dead center," Helen said after looking through her binoculars. "I never thought I would desert my .22-250, but the way this outfit reaches out, I may decide to use it instead," she continued while pretending she was glassing for chucks.

"I think you just lost your new rig," Jim told me. "You won't be able to sleep at night if you don't give her the rifle."

I said nothing. What was the use? After all, I couldn't blame her for wanting such a super long-range chuck rifle, and a good looking one, too.

This outfit was our latest wildcat project, a 6mm-.284 built on a .223 Remington 700 action. I was fortunate in getting a consigned Docter Optic 8-25x 50mm varmint scope for the new wildcat from B.C. Outdoors, P.O. Box 61497, Boulder City, NV 89006. Docter Optic scopes are well known in Europe and are beginning to generate a lot of interest with American hunters. Docter Optics scopes are made with one-piece tube construction of aircraft grade aluminum. The one-piece construction eliminates weak screw-together parts that can leak or even break under rough conditions. Jim commented

Custom rifle builder JIM PEIGHTAL dropped this chuck at 286 yards with the 6mm-.284 he built for DON LEWIS. Scope is a 8-25x 50mm Docter Optic. Note the H-S Precision Anschutz camo synthetic stock.

Helen Lewis



that the 1/4-minute click stop adjustments metered precisely when he conducted early range tests on a .22-250. Also, the large metering range (50 inches) makes it easy to compensate for misaligned rings or off-center mounting.

When I took the 8-25x scope to Jim, I told him it had incredibly clear optics. Later, after finishing all his tests and sighting the 6mm-.284 in for 275-yards, he called to tell me the image resolution was exceptionally bright and sharp. The 8-25x scope would make a perfect companion for the 6mm-.284 wildcat.

Of all the scopes we used that evening, only the Docter Optics showed a sharp detailed image of chucks in the dark shadows along a tree line more than 175 yards away. The grass along the woods was fairly high, which made it difficult to see even a large chuck. Admittedly, several other scopes picked up chucks in the grass, but the Docter was incredibly clear. The scope doesn't carry a bargain basement price, but it will give a lifetime of service.

When handloading began its infiltration through the hunting and shooting ranks, it was seen as a money-saving hobby. Nothing more, nothing less, and I'm being serious. That philosophy didn't last long, though. Handloaders soon became interested in accuracy, and to obtain accuracy requires a lot of testing from a solid shooting bench. During the late 1950s, crude shooting benches were built behind barns, in abandoned stripmines and literally any place that offered a hundred yards of clear space with a good backstop. Piled up logs and sand bags were usually used to stop the bullet directly behind the target. I built just such a backstop for my first bench. Later, when I moved, I had a high spoil pile about 10 yards behind the target house.

I built a benchrest inside my shop, wired the range for electricity, and incorporated a target turning machine in the 100-yard target house that was controlled by switches on the rear of my inside bench. My 50-yard target had several powerful

lamps, and two similar lights in the target house illuminated the target. Built around 1966, it's still in operation. I probably took the home reloading game further than most handloaders, but other fellows had lighted ranges and covered shooting benches. Group shooting for accuracy was a serious business.

Although wildcatting (reforming, shortening, straight walling and fire forming) dates back to the early 1920s, it really took off when handloading came on board after World War II. Not every handloader got involved in wildcatting, but a surprisingly large number of home reloaders satisfied their curiosity by putting their own theories on what the perfect cartridge should be. Well, that didn't last long, either. Here's why I think wildcatting lost ground in the mid-1960s.

Wildcatting is not cheap. After a cartridge has been designed, a reamer, or set of reamers, (rough and finishing) must be purchased. If the handloader could not do his own chambering, it was necessary to get a custom rifle builder to do the job. This also costs money. When a friend and I discussed the possibility of necking down a .378 Winchester to around 30-caliber (supposedly it would be the greatest big game cartridge ever), the barrel maker told me it was simply cost prohibitive. On top of that, he claimed we were dealing in an unknown area. Later, the .378-30 was wildcatted, but not from our design.

The average handloader, like me, soon learned it was a lot wiser to stick with wildcats that were established. For instance, the .25 Neidner, which was the forerunner of the Remington .25-06, generated a lot of interest. Another super wildcat is the .219 Donaldson Wasp, which is a necked-down .30-30 case. Probably the most famous is the .22-250, which was standardized in 1965 by Remington. There are so many improved cartridges, it's impossible to name them.

A true wildcat is different from an improved cartridge. For instance, the .19



Helen Lewis

THE 6mm-.284, right, is considerably larger than the .243 on the left. It's obvious that the 6mm-.284 handles more powder.

Calhoon is a wildcat made by necking down a .22 Hornet case to 19-caliber and fire forming to a straight wall case with a 30-degree shoulder angle. The parent cartridge cannot be fired in a .19 Calhoon rifle. The .22-250 Ackley Improved comes to life by firing a conventional .22-250 round in the improved chamber, which lengthens and straightens the wall of the case a bit, and shoves the shoulder to a sharp 40 degrees. The parent case can be fired in the improved chamber.

The K-Hornet was one of the first improved cases that became popular. A regular .22 Hornet round was fired in the improved chamber shoving the shoulder angle to 40 degrees. This lengthens the case somewhat and allows several more grains of powder to be used. With a 40-grain bullet, the .22 K-Hornet is capable of attaining more than 3,000 fps at the muzzle.

I have to admit that wildcatting is in my blood. In all fairness, most wildcats do not offer any significant velocity difference or any more accuracy than conventional factory rounds. It's probably true that some early wildcat creations gave the shooter a distinct edge over factory rounds, but that's not true today. Factory cartridges are more than adequate for all types of hunting.

Why wildcat then? That same question could be asked about dozens of things

people do that really aren't "absolutely necessary." I simply don't have an answer, but I don't need one to wildcat. It's just a part of me. That's why I'm constantly involved in wildcatting. The 6mm-.284 is a good example.

I don't know the entire background of the 6mm-.284, but when Winchester introduced the .284 cartridge, wildcatters realized the rebated case of the .284 held great potential for wildcats. I have no idea how many wildcat offsprings the .284 case produced, but it's likely the 6mm-.284 ranks as the best of the lot. Its main competitor is the Weatherby .240 Magnum, which lead some to believe the 6mm-.284 will remain a wildcat.

Case making requires two steps when using .284 brass. I discussed this with Kurt Nelson at Redding. Due to the sharp 35-degree shoulder angle of the .284 Winchester, it's next to impossible to reduce the case neck to 6mm in one operation. The sharp shoulder allows the neck to push back into the case. Nelson suggested using Redding's NO. 1 Form Die for the 6mm-.284, and then shoved the case into Redding's 6mm-.284 resizing die. It works perfectly on Redding's powerful Ultramag single stage press. I might add that 6.5-.284 cases are available from Huntingdon, Oroville, CA. A 6mm-.284 can be made from 6.5-.284 brass in one operation.

I used a Model 700 Remington heavy barrel chambered for the 6mm Remington. The experts claim a 1-in-10 twist is best for the 6mm-.284, but I settled for a 1-in-9. Dave Manson of Loon Lake Precision, Inc. (Manson Precision Reamers) ground the reamer for Jim Peightal. Peightal set the 6mm barrel back and then rechambered it for the 6mm-.284. To give the rifle a classic look, I chose a H-S Precision synthetic Silhouette Target Anschutz style stock with a beautiful baked-on camo finish. The stock length is 13½ inches, including an Uncle Mike's recoil pad. H-S Pro Series stocks are made from Kevlar, carbon fiber and fiberglass composite filled

with fiberglass-reinforced urethane foam that is freon-free. Incorporating a computer designed aluminum bedding block, the H-S stock is a true "drop-in," and they are designed to last a lifetime.

Of course, how a rifle looks or its caliber is not what's important. The proof of the pudding is in the shooting. Even though Peightal had told me the rifle shot well, he was sighting it in, not necessarily shooting a group.

Admittedly, I was a bit apprehensive when I closed the bolt on the first test

round. The shot hit high above the bullseye (remember, it was zeroed in for 275 yards.) The second shot cut the bottom of the first shot, and the third shot impacted about 1/4-inch above the first two. I didn't measure the group with a Neil Jones Target Measure that benchrest shooters use, but my machinist rule showed it was an even 5/8 center to center of the two widest holes. There's still plenty of testing to do, but I'm satisfied the 6mm-.284 is a super long range varmint cartridge, and I wouldn't lead you astray. □

Fun Games — By Connie Mertz

Find the Game

Find and circle the six hidden game species in the word scramble, and then use each to answer the statements below.

HURUFFEDGROUSEESOOGADANACNTMOURNINGDOVEING
TIBBARLIATNOTTOCSEAGRAYSQUIRREL
SOTNASAHEHPDEKCEGNIRNS

- 1. _____ We were first stocked in Pennsylvania by the Game Commission in 1915.
- 2. _____ Particularly fond of foxtail grass, I've been hunted in Pennsylvania since 1945.
- 3. _____ With 23 separate subspecies, I'm among the most successful and genetically diverse waterfowl in the world.
- 4. _____ I am the most widely distributed resident game bird.
- 5. _____ It takes 30 days from birth for me to first open my eyes.
- 6. _____ Nationally, I am hunted more than any other game mammal, and I'm popular here in Pennsylvania.

Copy the letters that are not circled in the word scramble to finish the statement below.

Something you and I anticipate each fall: _____

answers on p. 64

In the Wind

By Bob D'Angelo

The Wildlife Management Institute reports that, for the first time, a range received clearance to allow shooting into and over a wetland area. A National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit was issued to the Naperville Sportsman's Park, a 50-year-old trap range within the city limits of Naperville, Illinois. The permit also received extensive review and approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The 5-year permit requires the use of nontoxic shot, biodegradable targets, and a management program for the disposal of plastic wads and targets. The permit also requires a water quality monitoring program for the waters flowing from the range.

Last year hunters in Maine took 21,422 antlered deer, the most since records were kept, and for the first time topped the 20,000 mark. Of the bucks taken, 9,811 were 1½-year-olds; 5,313 were 2½-year-olds; and 6,298 were 3½ years or older.

In only the second year that North Dakota has had an early resident Canada goose season, hunters in September 2000 took about 37,000 geese. Hunters spent an average of three days afield and bagged nearly four birds each.

The cause of death of 2,000 brant at the Edwin P. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey is as yet undetermined. A die-off of more than 600 in the refuge impoundments last December and another in January in surrounding bays has biologists puzzled. Testing of the birds, water and food samples eliminated all of the known diseases such as West Nile Virus and avian cholera or contamination from pesticides.

A study suggests that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 1991 nationwide ban on lead shot for waterfowl hunting prevented the lead poisoning deaths of about 1.4 million ducks in the 1997 fall flight of 90 million ducks. Researchers report that approximately 462,000 to 615,000 acres of breeding habitat would have been required to produce the same number of birds that potentially were saved by nontoxic shot regulations that year.

There were 17 hunting related incidents reported last year in Kansas, down from 32 in 1999. No fatalities were reported, and four of the incidents were self-inflicted.

Hunters in New Hampshire took a near record 449 bears in 2000. The average age was 4½, which indicates a moderate harvest rate and translates into good bear survival and an expanding population. The population is declining in some parts of the state, but statewide it's increasing two percent annually.

In South Dakota last year there were 24 hunting related incidents and no fatalities; the total is below the 10-year average of 29.5.

Answers:

Word Scramble: ruffed grouse, Canada goose, mourning dove, cottontail rabbit, gray squirrel, ring-necked pheasant.

Statements: pheasant, dove, Canada goose, grouse, gray squirrel, cottontail rabbit.

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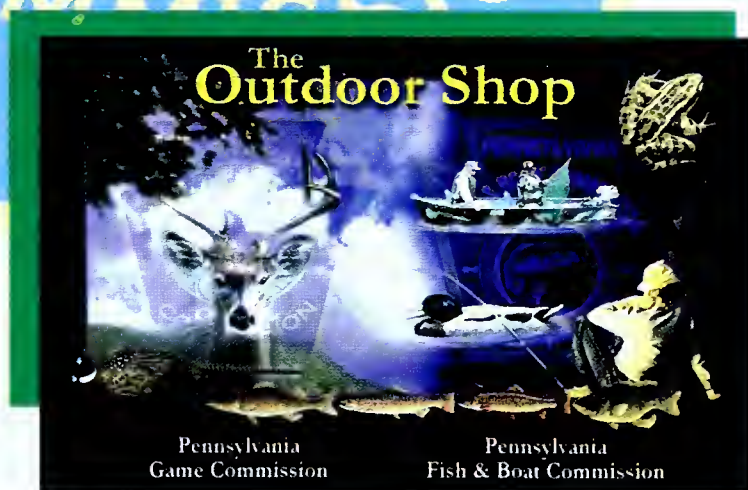
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On the Move

DEER HUNTING is not what it was just a few years ago, and a few years from now it's likely not going to be what it is today, either. This year's early antlerless deer seasons for flintlockers and junior and senior license holders, and the concurrent antlered/antlerless deer seasons beginning November 26 are major changes from the season format we've had for decades. And that antlerless licenses were snatched up at a faster rate than ever before shows the changes obviously appealed to many hunters.

That so many counties sold out so quickly caught many people by surprise, and as it turned out, many hunters, particularly nonresidents, were unable to obtain antlerless licenses in counties where they had grown accustomed to getting them in recent years.

Not that long ago, getting an antlerless deer license in many counties was almost impossible, and taking more than one deer a year in Pennsylvania was unimaginable. But then, in 1987, in response to growing deer numbers, the Game Commission initiated the bonus tag concept as a way of increasing the antlerless deer harvest. First offered only in four southeast counties, the bonus license option was expanded statewide in 1988. That year, for the first time, hunters could take more than one deer a year, in any county where bonus licenses were available.

In 1993, regulations were changed such that antlerless deer licenses remained valid if a hunter took a buck. (This was the same year the archery season was expanded to six weeks, continuing into the rut, and archers were required to have an antlerless license to take an antlerless deer. Until then, archers were allowed to take one deer of either sex anywhere in the state.)

So, in effect, in just the past 14 years, hunters have gone from being allowed to take one deer a year to up to four — not counting what's been allowed in special regulations counties and farms enrolled in the various deer damage area programs.

In recent years we've been riding the crest of excessive deer populations and, in turn, hunting seasons and bag limits have been more liberal than anybody would have imagined less than 20 years ago. This year, with virtually the entire antlerless allocation being sold, and a 2-week regular antlerless deer season, there's every reason to expect a record antlerless deer harvest.

In coming years, however, as deer populations are brought more into line with what the habitat can support, antlerless license allocations and/or seasons are likely to change even more.

The Game Commission has and will continue to provide the best hunting opportunities possible — for nonresidents and residents. Antler restrictions, new management units, and an early antlerless season for all hunters are all being considered. But to think antlerless deer licenses will remain as plentiful and readily available across the state like they have in recent years is not realistic. We should enjoy the hunting we have now, but as deer populations come down, opportunities will change as well. I, for one, am not expecting to be able to get three antlerless deer licenses a year, especially in the counties where I've been hunting, in coming years. — *Bob Mitchell*

letters

Editor:

I would like to thank the Game Commission and the Fish & Boat Commission for their efforts to provide public hunting and fishing opportunities. This past spring, while on a state game lands, I had the pleasure of catching trout and calling in and seeing some turkey gobblers. Both activities were within a few hundred yards of each other.

J. W. CABLE, JR.
SHIPPENSBURG

Editor :

I would like to thank the Game Commission, and especially Larry Mummert, for the excellent Hunter-Trapper Education class I attended this fall. I had never gone hunting, but want to accompany my boyfriend on his trips next year. I am 32 and was absolutely amazed at the respect females my age and younger were shown. And even though my boyfriend had taken the class many years ago, he found that he learned a lot, too.

We were extremely disappointed to learn, though, that our tax dollars very dilligently paid out of our pockets don't fund the Game Commission in any way. We also were enlightened in the fact that the course was taught completely by volunteers.

D. M. WIKE
GETTYSBURG

Editor:

As usual, in the October issue, Bob Sopchick wrote another spine-tingler. This

time, though, it really hit close to home. I stared at the last paragraph for several minutes before I wrote it on a piece of good paper and tacked it to my son's bulletin board, right beside a saying he had hung there years ago: A ship in harbor is safe, but that's not what ships are made for.

Early next summer, he will graduate from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and finally be able to run away to sea. Meanwhile, his parents will be heading back to rural Pennsylvania and finally be able to stay there. So: One way is not better than the other, though, as long as we realize that as much wonder lies in an acorn as in an ocean.

My sentiments exactly.

C. PLATUSICH
WARWICK, RI

Editor;

In the October "The Naturalists Eye" I enjoyed reading about all of the foods available to wildlife. There were some I never heard of, and I was sort of surprised that Marcia didn't mention witch hazel, which I think is a good food for turkey and other birds.

R. D. EMLET
LOYSVILLE

Editor:

My daughter and I attended the tour of SGL 54. LMO Brad

Myers did an exceptionally professional job fielding questions and explaining the much needed and valuable projects going on.

Keep up the good work.

D.R. LEWIS
CHICORA

Editor:

I've been receiving — and enjoyed — *Game News*, even since moving to Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1961. You do a great job in keeping people all over the country informed about what's going on in Pennsylvania.

The "PA Elk Hunts: 1920s Style," in the September issue was very interesting. It's too bad Arnold Giovanni couldn't have been given a chance to participate in this year's hunt.

G. A. LISOTTO,
ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Editor:

In response to the letter in the September issue about safety and the concurrent deer seasons, one of the ten commandments of firearm safety is "Positively identify your target." Of course, this should be done before the firearm is even pointed in the direction of the target.

It's hard for me to understand how a human walking on two legs can look like a deer.

M. McCARGO
GAINESVILLE, NY

Your comments are welcome. Mail them to "Letters," 2001 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797. Letters will be edited for brevity and clarity.



When she died, he stopped hunting, but seeing that big buck made him decide to head into the woods one last time.

The Sacrifice

By Bob D'Angelo

Game News Associate Editor

THE OLD MAN watched the snowflakes pelting the windowpane on the old house, and he stared, almost mesmerized, at the snow piling up on the wood stacked just off the porch. There was almost three inches now, and it looked as if there would be plenty more come morning.

Bill couldn't remember the last time there was snow for the deer season opener. His thoughts drifted back in time. Maybe it was back in '84. He thought about how Martha loved the snow, and he had to fight back the tears. She had been gone more than a year now. In fact, it was a year and three weeks to the day that Martha had passed away. Oh, how he missed that woman, his wife of 42 years.

The old man didn't hunt last year and didn't intend to ever hunt again. Hunting had always been his passion, ever since he was old enough to carry a gun. When Martha passed away, though, his heart was no longer in it. For that matter, his heart wasn't in much of anything.

Something that happened on the lane leading to the old man's house, though, had flamed a spark from deep within and rejuvenated his hunting desire.

It was on a night under a brilliant full moon during the last week in October. The old man's pickup made a bend in the rutted lane, and a moving form emerged from the standing corn along one side of the road. The old man had seen plenty of deer

in his time, but the buck that stepped into the middle of the lane was like none he had ever seen before. The halo-like glow of antler was truly a sight to behold in the soft moonlight. The thick antler beams swept well beyond both ears, and a quick estimation put at least 12 points on a rack as high as it was wide. The brow tines looked to be nearly eight inches.

The old man had heard some of the young fellows at a restaurant in town talking about a big buck that one of them saw late in the season last year. "It was down by Salmon Run. I was watching several does when I saw a flash of movement behind me," a husky red-haired man recounted the story. "By the time I spun around, the huge buck had disappeared into a thick tangle of growth, and I couldn't get a shot. I would give anything for a buck like that," he added.

A chill in the room tore the old man from his thoughts of the huge buck, and he got up from his chair and put another log in the old coal stove. In his mind he could see Martha standing over the stove in her faded apron. That's where she usually was when he came in from hunting. "What did you get, Bill?" Martha always asked, her blue eyes sparkling. "Well done," she would say when he had his buck or laid a brace of grouse on the counter.

A sharp rap on the front door released the old man once again from his reminiscing, and he was somewhat irritated to be brought back to reality because thinking about old times brought solace to his lonely heart. Who could it be, he wondered. He seldom got visitors. He opened the door and was surprised to see the red-haired fellow he had seen in town. The one talking about the big buck.

"Mr. Johnson, I'm Rusty Sullivan. I bought the Anderson camp up on the main road a few years ago," he said, holding a large hand out to the old man. "I'm from Pittsburgh but manage to get up here to hunt during small game and deer season each year."

The old man had never thought much of the big-city hunters who came up here to hunt. "These guys come up here each deer season, hunt a few hours on opening day, then hang up their rifles to gather dust for another year," he'd always tell Martha.

"Oh, Bill, you're too critical," she'd always say. "Maybe you should get to know some of those fellows who own camps up here. I worry about you hunting alone; you're not a young man anymore, you know?"

"These city guys don't know how to hunt," he'd reply. "Besides, I'm a loner. I don't need anyone slowin' me down."

The old man addressed the younger man standing on his front porch, "What can I do for you?"

Sullivan was quick to answer, "I was wondering if I could park my Jeep on your lane tomorrow morning? I'm hunting on the national forest down by Salmon Creek, and it would be easier to walk in from your property."

Before the old man could answer, Sullivan continued, "I almost got a shot at a huge buck last year, down where the tornado came through by the creek. I saw him again in the same

area while hunting squirrels in October. I've been hunting for nine years, but haven't shot a buck yet. Sure would be nice for that big one to be my first," Sullivan said, grinning. "Have you seen him?"

"Yeah, once," the old man replied. He thought for a few seconds about telling the younger man to park at the gated road, and walk the two miles into Salmon Creek, like most other hunters did, but something about the sincerity in Sullivan's voice touched a soft spot in the old man's heart.

"Go ahead and park off my lane, but make sure you don't block me in," the old man said in a stern voice.

"Thanks," the younger man responded as he turned and started for his Jeep.

"Oh, Sullivan," the old man called before the younger man could reach his vehicle. "Post down by Salmon Creek where the saddle leads into the tornado area not far from where Two Mile Run dumps into the Salmon. He'll use that saddle to get in the thick stuff without being seen when the shootin' starts. I'll hunt up on top, and maybe I'll drive him down to you. Make sure you stay there all day, too" he instructed. He thought Martha would have liked that. He preferred to hunt alone, but at least he had made the effort to be friendly, he reasoned.

The old man opened the door of the chestnut gun cabinet and pulled the old .300 Savage from the rack. He worked the action, made smooth from years of use, and peered through the scope. In 54 seasons the Savage had accounted for 43 bucks. More than his fair share the old man thought as he rubbed the fine-grain walnut. He had never considered himself a trophy hunter, always taking the first legal buck that came along, and in all of his years of hunting, the largest buck he had ever taken was an average size 6-point. He caught that buck crossing the big meadow behind the house on the last day of the '68 season, he remembered. It wasn't hard to forget. That was the season when Martha's cousin came up to hunt and shot a wide-



racked 8-point from the stand where the old man usually posted on opening day. He wouldn't mind taking just one big-racked buck. It would be a nice way to end a long hunting career, he thought.

Eight inches of snow greeted the old man as he stepped off the porch at 6 o'clock the next morning. The crisp, cold air was invigorating as he started the long climb through the meadow. It felt good to be hunting again, he thought. Once up on the ridge, he found the familiar large rock that overlooked most of the hollow. He had used this rock as a deer stand many times over the years. He scraped the snow away, stuffed the old Savage's magazine with round-nosed 180-grain cartridges, quietly levered a round into the chamber, checked the safety, and then settled in to wait.

The hollow sloped downhill for about 300 yards, then funneled into the thick cover created by the tornado that had ripped through the area 15 years earlier. The old man knew that Sullivan would be waiting at the bottom. The old man remembered how the young hunter's face lit up when talking about the big buck, and of how he had said he would do anything for the trophy buck, and he thought it funny how deer made some men react. He,

himself, thought that hunting was all there was to life — until Martha died, that is.

The old man watched the darkness begin to fade and dawn emerge. The outline of the trees began to take shape. There was nothing as soothing as the solitude of the big woods enveloped in snow. It wouldn't be long now, he thought, until the hunters coming in from the main road would have the deer moving, but it wasn't until late morning when he saw his first deer. The three animals wound their way single-file through the laurel from the other side of the ridge and crossed in front of him. The first two were doe, but the third carried a long set of spikes.

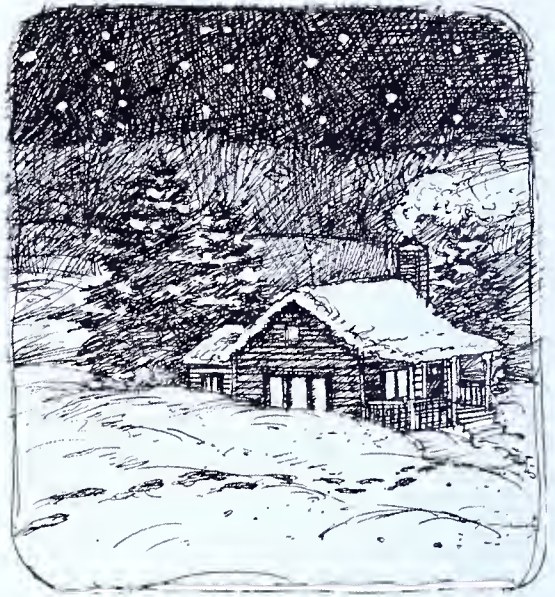
The old man watched the deer pick their way down the hollow. If they continued on the same course they would cross directly in front of the young hunter below. He waited for the sound of the shot that never came, and he admired the young hunter's resolve in passing up a chance for his first legal buck to wait for a particular deer. The old man knew he couldn't have done the same in his younger years.

The day wore on, and the old man patiently waited on stand, enjoying every minute of it. Martha had always wondered how he could stand in one place for 10 hours at a time. It wasn't hard. His soul connected with the whole outdoor experience. He knew that if the big buck became separated from the security cover of the tornado area, it would only be a matter of time until it would attempt to reach it. The long hollow was the best avenue for reaching it undetected.

The long shadows created by the late afternoon sun were spreading across the snow-covered landscape when the old man saw them. A doe followed closely by a small 8-point materialized on a trail leading through small clumps of laurel that dotted the top half of the hollow, well within range of the old man's Savage. The two deer stopped in a small opening and stared back in the same direction from where they had just come. The old man instinctively searched the cover that held the attention of the two deer, and he was quick to pick out the dark form slinking through the thick laurel.

He had guessed right. It was the buck he was waiting for. He caught a glimpse of the huge rack held low to the ground as the cautious animal slowly worked through the cover. He eased up his rifle and trained the Weaver scope on the opening where the doe and the smaller buck still stood, as the huge buck's path would bring it to the same spot.

When the big buck hit the opening, the old hunter would be ready. He was seconds away from the best buck of his lifetime, and most likely his last. His thoughts drifted again to the young hunter, Rusty Sullivan, who patiently waited at the bottom of the hollow for this same buck. Most likely the small 8-point would run past the



young man. The deer always crossed through the saddle to reach the cover on the other side, and this 8-point would be a fine first buck for any hunter.

The time had come. The huge buck stopped at the edge of the cover, then stepped out. The old man's crosshairs were centered on its shoulder, and slight pressure was applied to the trigger. He adjusted the scope, and the shot echoed down the hollow, shattering the afternoon solitude.

As expected, the two deer shuffled off down the hollow, and the old man knew it would be only a moment until another rifle shot would echo back up the hollow.

When it came, first one, followed seconds later by another, the old man walked over to his downed buck. He felt better than he had in a long time as he ran his fingers over the well-formed, but small 8-point rack . . .

After tagging and field-dressing his buck, he began the drag over the top of the ridge. As he started down through the meadow, he looked back on the darkening ridge one more time. Was it the wind whistling through the trees that seemed to say *well done* or was he just imagining it? It didn't matter. The snow began to come down again, and he could see the glow of light from his kitchen window as he continued through the meadow. □



Gifts from the Christmas Tree

By Charles Fergus

SOME OF MY best grouse hunts have been in the snow. I like the clarity of winter days afield — the crisp air, the bluish-white dusted hills with their ravines and ridges exposed, the way sounds and smells carry. It's cold, so I can hunt long and hard without overheating. Grouse tracks in the snow keep the excitement level high, the sense that a flush may be imminent. And the shooting can be good, with the birds prominent against the white background and no leaves on the trees to impede vision.

I particularly remember a hunt during

the late small game season, just after Christmas in 1989. My springer spaniel, Jenny, was three years old, and finally getting the hang of hunting grouse. She lies snoring at my feet as I write this, cloudy-eyed, almost deaf, and I hope those leg twitches mean she is remembering being young and strong and bounding up snowy slopes and charging into the heady scent of grouse.

At the time, I was carrying an Ithaca 20-gauge side-by-side, a gun I would later discover was cast on for a

left-handed shooter (I'm a righty), yet which I had nevertheless learned to shoot with fair proficiency.

On the day I'm remembering, Jenny and I were hunting by ourselves at Christmas Tree. I name all my grouse coverts — a means of communicating in code, more or less, with my two-legged gunning partners — and this particular moniker came about when my friend, Carl, flushed a grouse out of a shrubby hemlock that stood by itself, like a Christmas tree, in the middle of some oak brush. I can't remember now if Carl connected on that bird, because a shot like that can be tough, since a grouse often glides off a tree perch without the loud wing-thuds of an off the ground flush.

Jenny and I worked our way through a patch of mountain laurel with six inches of snow on the ground. Lines of grouse tracks wound between the twisted stems: troughs two inches deep in the white powder. When the snow lies damp and compacted, or has a crust, a grouse can walk right on top: a comblike fringe of horny growth lining each toe increases the surface area of the feet, distributing the bird's weight like snowshoes.

In the late season, grouse feed on buds (aspen and apple are favorites), seeds, the smaller acorns, leaves of green plants growing in and around spring seeps, and fruits such as barberry, thornapples, greenbrier, multiflora rose and grapes. The birds tend to feed heavily in early morning and again in late evening, exposing them-

selves to predators for the least amount of time. During midday they loaf in thick brush, the still leafy tops of wind-felled trees and grapevine tangles.

I followed Jenny up the hollow, where the trunks of aspens glowed a burnished green-gold in the low winter sun. I heard a sudden wing-stutter as a grouse flushed out of range. It seemed to be headed in the same direction that we were — up the hollow, toward the Christmas Tree. Jenny hunted from side to side ahead of me. She didn't work in a regular fashion, as she

might have done in covering the uniform weed growth of a pheasant field, but rather by slipping from one likely patch to another, checking each carefully.

Blackberry canes, maroon and studded with back-angled thorns, arched and crisscrossed above the snow. Jenny sniffed along the perimeter of an oak crown that had crashed down in a summer storm and still

held onto its brown leaves, now whispering in the wind.

We entered a maze where whole dead trees had fallen one on top of the other, trees killed by gypsy moth defoliation years earlier — now with the omnipresent briars, plus stems of red maples and witch hazels springing up profusely in the newly made clearing, the tangle further complicated with prostrate, whiskery-barked grapevines.

Jenny nearly skidded to a stop beneath a witch hazel, and her tail was wagging furiously. Immediately I got my feet in position and held the buttstock of the shotgun tucked between my right elbow and my side. I stood waiting for the flush that never came.

Tracks potted about between the canes. They looked fresh. Jenny sniffed



along the top of a log and jumped down on the far side of it. I expected a bird to come rocketing out from the lee of that log, but it didn't happen. Still, my dog was obviously getting scent — maybe birds had fed here a few hours before, and then moved on. Fallen grapes lay on the snow, and grouse tracks were everywhere.

We kept hunting uphill. A raven flew over, small and black against swift-moving clouds. Tracks of deer and foxes dotted the snow. A small band of chickadees and nuthatches fed among the trees as we reached the head of the hollow. Here I had two choices: turn right and hunt along a south-facing hillside with a string of dead timber, openings and plenty of grape tangles, or bear left and go straight to the Christmas Tree. I whistled Jenny in and gave her a hand signal.

We set off along the south-facing slope, the land angling down to our right. Briars grew thick, and rocks teetered and clacked beneath my boots. In one of the grape tangles, with Jenny downhill from me, I noticed her pace quicken. She dived into one side of a blowdown as a grouse flushed from the other. Right to left I swung the shotgun, overtaking the bird with the gun's front bead. A cloud of feathers streamed back from the grouse as it tumbled in midair. Then it angled down into the snow, hitting in a white puff and rolling downhill for a few feet before stopping. Jenny was on it quickly. She hitched it up into her mouth, turned, and padded toward me.

I took the bird in hand, marveling at the size of the mature male. I noticed im-

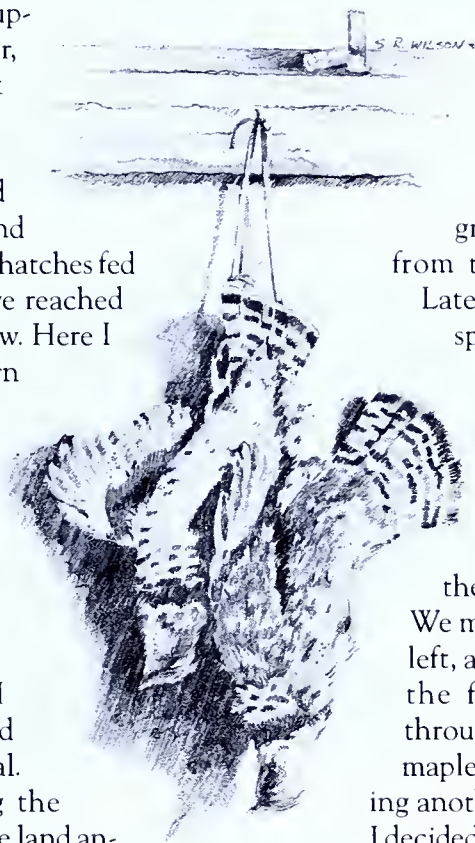
mediately that a silvery-gray color flecked its plumage all over. Instead of the usual chestnut-colored tail, the feathers showed alternating zones of pale tan, darker brown and silver, broken near the tip by the normal broad black band, which stood out with particular distinctness against the silver. In more than 30 years of grouse hunting in Pennsylvania, I have taken few such birds. I knew this grouse was an old male from the length of its tail.

Later, I measured the fan's spread at more than 14 inches.

I pouched the grouse, and then reloaded and hunted onward. Soon we came to the end of the series of grape tangles. We made a wide sweep to the left, and hunted back toward the flat top of the ridge through mixed oak and red maple saplings without flushing another bird.

I decided to make a loop through some scrub oak that would take me in the general direction of the cover's namesake: the lone hemlock. Hunting onward, always with one eye on my spaniel, I glimpsed the dark green forest sentinel in the distance. I whistled Jenny to hup and paused to take a tug on my water bottle. Warmed by the uphill climb, I opened the top button of my wool shirt. I finished drinking and put the bottle back in my game pouch, next to the soft form of the silvertail grouse.

I myself had flushed grouse out of the Christmas Tree on several occasions. Deer had browsed off the tree's lower growth, up to about five feet of



height, and although not very tall — maybe 25 feet — the hemlock was quite bushy. Years earlier, loggers had taken the oaks all around it, leaving the lone conifer, studded with branches and dense with blackish-green needles. A grouse could hide in such a tree and never be seen. In fact, a lot of grouse did just that, and it always seemed my luck to approach the tree on the side opposite the bird, so that I rarely even got off a shot if a ruff happened to be there.

Cautiously, I approached the hemlock, trying to concentrate on what Jenny was doing, but also keenly aware of the knot of cover enclosed within the tree. Just when I was trying to decide which side of the hemlock to go around, I heard two faint wingbeats, followed by the silence of a gliding bird. I did the only thing I could think of: I went to my knees in the snow. The grouse, which, true to form, had flown from the far side of the tree, dipped almost to the level of the mountain laurel before flapping its wings again. I snapped off a shot and watched as a few needles drifting down where the pattern had clipped the hemlock. Jenny, too, had heard the bird flush and gone running after it. I waited, kneeling in the snow. The sight picture had seemed right, but the bird vanished into the oak brush just as I'd shot. I had no idea whether I'd hit it.

Back came the spaniel, however, weaving between the trunks, her head held low, ears folded back, jaws clamped gently, securely, around the dead grouse. It was another male. I broke the shotgun, unloaded the live

Chuck Fergus's two most recent books, *Wildlife of Pennsylvania* and *Thornapples*, are available from the Game Commission.

round, and happily accepted the bird from my dog. Again I was astonished. This, too, was no ordinary grouse. It was just as heavy, just as big as the first bird — its tail, drooping, spread to an extraordinary width — and the coloration was incredible. I had seen one other such grouse; rather I had seen a fan from a similar bird pinned to a cabin wall.

The grouse had a coppery cast to its plumage. Where black would fret the feathering of a normal grouse, a metallic cinnamon gleamed. The terminal tailband and shoulder ruffs both shone as bright as polished copper. I knelt for a long time — kneeling seemed to be the proper position, after such an outing in the uplands — turning the bird in my hands, petting my spaniel's head and scratching behind her ears.

Eventually I stood and placed the copper phase grouse in my pouch, along with the silvertail. The two empty shells rode there as well. I felt a glow of accomplishment. Not often had I bagged two grouse with two shots.

Holding the gun broken across my forearm, I turned back and looked at the hemlock. It stood there silent and immobile. A little snow dressed its dark, filigreed crown. I knew I would come back to this covert, to this very tree, and on each and every return visit I would think about the two grouse, gifts from the Christmas Tree. □

2000-01 Turkey, Small Game, and Furbearer Harvests

By Christopher S. Rosenberry, PhD

PGC Wildlife Biometrician

Photos by Larissa Rose

EACH YEAR we survey a sample of Pennsylvania hunters and trappers to determine their success and hunting effort. Each purchaser of a general hunting license has a 1 in 50 chance of receiving a Game Take Survey. Each purchaser of a furtaker license has a 1 in 5 chance of receiving a Furtaker Survey. Because we cannot monitor the harvest of every hunter or trapper, we rely on hunters and trappers

to accurately complete the surveys. Without cooperation of surveyed hunters and trappers, harvest and participation data become nearly impossible to collect. Using information reported by hunters and trappers, we calculate overall harvests and participation estimates.

We use standard surveying techniques to estimate overall harvests and participation. In the



JOE ROSE, center, his father, RONNIE, right, and father-in-law, GRANT TISSUE set out on a day of squirrel hunting in Bedford County with Grant's mountain curr, REBA.

continued on page 15

TABLE 1. HARVEST BY SPECIES, 1995-2000.

Year	Spring Turkey	Fall Turkey	Rabbit	Grouse	Squirrel	Pheasant ^a	Woodcock
1995	36,401	49,748	1,010,938	315,197	1,599,104	250,930	28,624
1996	33,726	35,787	807,072	218,256	1,442,560	215,502	26,846
1997	30,956	37,398	827,520	187,770	1,352,038	219,864	23,878
1998	32,661	33,628	911,003	183,468	1,331,051	216,669	31,602
1999	37,806	40,718	715,862	177,355	1,236,108	211,257	25,704
2000	43,815	44,865	770,841	145,525	1,276,009	233,537	31,199

Year	Quail ^a	Dove	Geese	Duck ^a	Hare	Woodchuck	Crow
1995	1,204	670,791	64,382	156,511	2,997	1,225,101	295,962
1996	3,387	603,114	96,910	151,142	1,582	1,149,995	275,541
1997	1,766	506,677	115,506	188,034	1,432	1,251,145	184,944
1998	241	562,348	131,831	146,050	2,507	1,204,582	247,047
1999	3,938	519,116	128,385	164,328	2,412	1,117,970	209,273
2000	4,373	478,602	194,480	185,185	1,747	1,191,114	219,773

^aEstimates exclude harvest on shooting preserves.

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF HUNTERS, BY SPECIES, 1995-2000.

Year	Spring Turkey	Fall Turkey	Rabbit	Grouse	Squirrel	Pheasant ^a	Woodcock
1995	239,521	261,395	297,570	239,014	293,852	182,224	15,702
1996	241,613	250,377	280,351	214,272	279,259	171,275	14,464
1997	233,287	249,934	261,115	197,994	267,051	148,900	13,374
1998	194,819 ^b	199,696 ^b	242,509	183,511	252,738	158,497	12,907
1999	237,984	244,638	221,179	174,576	238,887	142,142	12,212
2000	231,860	230,448	229,906	162,073	238,540	149,260	12,977

Year	Quail ^a	Dove	Geese	Duck ^a	Hare	Woodchuck	Crow
1995	1,451	67,754	28,715	30,274	5,949	113,127	36,782
1996	1,184	65,808	31,119	32,434	5,011	101,576	30,087
1997	1,009	60,178	30,574	32,180	3,723	104,561	30,696
1998	1,116	57,579	32,238	34,103	5,506	92,517	31,390
1999	1,550	49,551	33,734	31,503	4,379	90,853	29,131
2000	1,870	52,496	35,628	31,998	3,666	99,294	29,371

^a Estimates don't include number of hunters on shooting preserves.
^b These low figures may have been caused by not including a Turkey Management Area map on the 1998-99 survey.



Not long into the hunt, REBA trees a squirrel. JOSH ROSE tries to get a shot at the elusive critter his grandfather's dog sniffed out.



TABLE 3. HARVEST PER 100 HUNTER-DAYS, BY SPECIES, 1995-2000.

Year	Spring Turkey	Fall Turkey	Rabbit	Grouse	Squirrel	Pheasant ^a	Woodcock
1995	3.4	5.7	57.1	24.6	98.1	29.7	45.6
1996	3.1	4.1	49.2	19.3	92.0	29.4	52.1
1997	3.0	4.5	54.2	18.4	92.5	33.9	49.2
1998	3.7	4.9	60.0	18.5	93.5	27.9	57.1
1999	3.7	5.0	56.4	20.1	94.6	34.9	54.5
2000	4.4	5.7	59.5	17.8	101.7	34.3	55.6

Year	Quail ^a	Dove	Geese	Duck ^a	Hare	Woodchuck	Crow
1995	20.0	227.3	50.1	96.8	25.6	97.8	152.6
1996	66.9	214.9	55.3	89.5	17.1	92.3	147.5
1997	62.2	213.0	53.9	94.5	20.9	100.8	103.5
1998	3.6	215.1	66.9	77.4	21.2	88.6	110.8
1999	78.7	249.9	55.7	86.8	35.1	97.1	120.8
2000	49.1	207.2	75.0	91.5	32.6	99.5	139.2

^a Estimates exclude effort on shooting preserves.

tables, we report a single number, such as 233,537 pheasants, but this is an estimate, not an exact number.

Over the years, small game harvests and hunters have decreased, but total turkey and waterfowl harvests and hunters have increased (Tables 1 and 2). Despite changes

in hunters and harvests, one thing is relatively consistent – hunters today are as successful or more successful based on harvest per 100 hunter-days than they were 5 years ago (Table 3). In contrast to small game hunters and harvests, furtakers and furbearer harvests have remained relatively stable (Tables 4 and 5) with the exceptions of muskrat harvests (decreasing) and coyote harvests (increasing).

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF HUNTERS AND TRAPPERS OF FURBEARERS, 1995-2000.

Year	Raccoon	Muskrat	Red Fox	Gray Fox	Opossum	Skunk	Mink	Coyote ^a	Weasel
1995	9,718	4,465	8,080	6,908	3,989	2,643	2,879	20,413	853
1996	12,951	6,478	10,007	8,361	6,140	3,443	3,703	21,937	942
1997	13,750	7,363	10,330	8,553	6,386	3,473	4,434	24,526	1,125
1998	12,794	5,900	9,982	8,594	5,558	2,948	3,512	30,016	733
1999 ^b	8,496	3,565	7,834	6,901	3,129	1,969	2,431	29,190	505
2000 ^b	7,947	3,534	8,162	7,112	3,442	2,034	2,334	28,800	600

^a Combines estimates from Game Take Survey and Furtaker Survey.

^b Includes correction for junior and senior combination licenses.



JOSH’S shot was right on, and he was able to bag and proudly show off his quarry — a nice gray squirrel. He and his grandfather immediately skin the squirrel and resume the search for more.



TABLE 5. HARVEST OF FURBEARERS, 1995-2000.

Year	Raccoon	Muskrat	Red Fox	Gray Fox	Opossum	Skunk	Mink	Coyote ^a	Weasel
1995	120,462	130,442	31,110	23,518	29,688	9,995	8,602	6,662	687
1996	214,958	146,013	29,623	23,307	48,549	11,571	9,315	7,957	589
1997	194,696	216,066	36,923	26,043	60,717	12,344	14,063	6,685	1,172
1998	195,110	148,202	47,202	32,922	56,287	11,190	12,238	11,652	662
1999 ^b	107,407	94,215	36,860	26,794	33,723	6,723	13,774	9,586	319
2000 ^b	108,890	79,880	33,060	24,452	29,093	7,534	8,614	10,383	340

^a Combines estimates from the Game Take and Furtaker surveys.

^b Includes correction for junior and senior combination licenses.

Unlike the rest of the state, turkeys in TMA 7B have been declining. A team of biologist aides has been working to find out . . .

What's Up?

By Larissa Rose

PGC Information Writer

Photos by the author

FOR YEARS, the residents of South Mountain have been wondering where the turkeys have gone. Since the early 1980s, turkey populations around this tiny village near the southern Pennsylvania border have been declining. To find out why, the Game Commission — with strong support from the PA Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation — has conducted a 2½-year study in the southcentral part of the state known as Turkey Management Area 7B (TMA 7B).

Since 1995, turkey harvests in TMA 7B have been the poorest in the state. Since then, the 4-week spring gobbler season has remained in effect in the area, but the fall season has been reduced to one week, to stabilize or increase populations. Hunter success in the spring seasons, however, has not improved, indicating the turkey population has not grown in response to the protection provided by the limited fall season.

To figure out why turkeys have been declining in TMA 7B while populations in the rest of the state are increasing, hen survival, mortality factors, nest success and poult recruitment are being studied.

Under the supervision of wild turkey project leader Mary Jo Casalena, the study began in 1999. Much of the day-to-day field work was done by several biologist aides. These guys spent long days doing everything from trapping and putting transmitters on the birds, to luring them in to try and count their poults.

In August of 1999, Doug Little, from Buffalo, New York, who holds a graduate degree in wildlife from Mississippi State University, and Mike Niebauer, of Johnstown, who earned his bachelors degree in Biology and Ecology from Juniata College, were hired as biologist aides for 2½ years. During the first nine months, Mary Jo, Doug and Mike worked hard to get the project up and running, capturing and tracking 74 hens through the winter.

In May 2000, Lee Humbert, a graduate of Purdue University from Huntington, Indiana, came on as a temporary biologist aide. During the summer of 2000, Penn State wildlife biology student Craig Swope helped out with the hectic season, and this past April, Patrick Bowen, from New York and a graduate of SUNY — Environmental Science and Forestry, joined the crew. Another member is Penn State graduate student Mark Lowles, who has been with the project since January 2000, and is working to determine the relationship between



MIKE NIEBAUER uses telemetry equipment to locate one of the birds in his area. The Broncos the field assistants used to travel throughout TMA 7B were equipped with periscope-like telemetry antennas to get daily positions on the turkeys.

and juvenile hens also received backpack-style radio transmitters, which enabled the birds to be followed for up to 20 months.

Seven days a week, these field assistants traveled throughout their respective sections, searching for transmitter-equipped birds. During the fall and winter, the birds were monitored each day, to see if they were alive or dead, and two or three times a week their locations determined.

Once spring arrived and nesting season began, however, their locations were pinpointed each day.

A hen lays one egg a day. After producing an average of 12, she begins to incubate them, and 28 days later, they hatch. (Waiting until she has a full clutch before incubating ensures that the eggs will all hatch at the same time.)

By listening to the kinds of tones the radio transmitter gave off, the bi-

habitat and survival and reproductive success for his thesis.

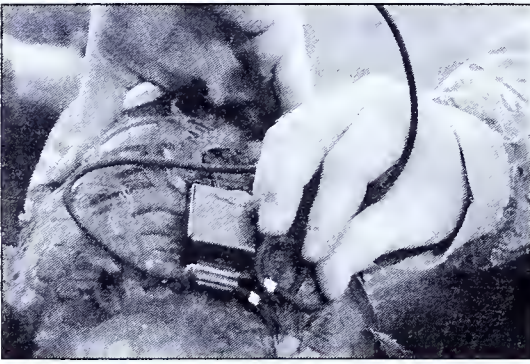
TMA 7B is 60 percent open land and 40 percent forested, 84,000 acres of which comprise the Michaux State Forest — the most heavily visited state forest in Pennsylvania. For this study, the 471,170-acre area was divided into four sections: north, east-central, west-central and south. The north section, Lee Humberg's area, extended north from Shippensburg Road to Mount Holly Springs. The east-central area, covered by Pat Bowen, encompassed the area between Shippensburg road and Route 30 east of Ridge Road. The west-central section laid between Route 30 and Shippensburg Road and west of Ridge Road, and the birds in that area were tracked by Doug Little. The south section, Mike Niebauer's territory, covered the area south of U.S. Route 30 to the Maryland border.

Every fall and winter, birds in all four areas were captured using rocket nets. A comparison of leg length to feather replacement was used to determine the bird's sex, and every one received a leg band. Adult



Examinations must be performed on each turkey trapped during the fall and winter. To determine the sex of the turkeys, DOUG LITTLE compares the feather replacement stage to the leg length of a bird held by volunteer DALE DETWILLER.





A BACKPACK STYLE radio transmitter is attached to turkey hens in TMA 7B to allow them to be located throughout the year to study hen and poult survival.

ologist aides could tell when a bird had begun incubating, because she remains still on the nest for long periods of time, rather than wandering throughout the area.

When one of the radio-tagged hens started incubation, the telemetry equipment was used to determine the nest's exact location. This was often a time-consuming and tricky procedure. The biologist aides circled the nest, remaining far enough away to not disturb the hen, and triangulated its location, then left the area until after the clutch had hatched and the hen had led her poults away. At that point, the guys returned to search for the nest to determine how many eggs the hen incubated and hatched.

I hey also used a global positioning system to mark where the nest was located, so Mark Lowles could return to the site to determine what shelter was available where the birds chose to nest. Like many ground-nesting birds, turkey poults are precocial; they are active and able to walk and feed on their own within six

Biologist aide LEE HUMBERG examines a recently hatched turkey nest to determine how many poults were incubated and hatched. Four weeks later, the hen was lured in to see how many of her poults had survived.

to 12 hours after hatching, and are ready to leave the nest for good within 12 to 24 hours. Even with this adaptation, turkey poults — along with their mothers — are very susceptible to predation during their first few weeks of life.

Once the hen and poults leave the nest, they may travel for miles to find an area to feed. This could be anything from a grassy opening or logging road through a forest, to a large field near a wooded area. The biologist aides used telemetry to locate every bird each day and keep track of where she and her offspring were.

Predation, along with cold, wet weather, causes many of the birds to die. To find out how many of the poults in TMA 7B lived to be four weeks old, the guys had to lure them in close enough to count. As any turkey hunter might imagine, this was no easy task.

Because the birds were located every day, the guys were able to pick a spot to set up near the hen and her poults. The poult counts required two people, but on the days I tagged along, there were three of us decked out in head-to-toe camouflage. The trick to doing poult counts is to make the hen believe that she has lost one of her offspring. A poult has a distinct cry it uses when lost, to help its mother locate it, and the guys had a recording of this high-pitched whistle. The aides used telemetry to get as close as possible to the hen and her brood, then they settled in and tried to call in the bird close enough to count her poults.



I was actually surprised by how well this tactic worked. "After four weeks, shouldn't she know how many poults she has?" I asked. "Why would she think she's missing one if she knows she's had three for the past month?"

Apparently, turkey hens are much like any other mother: It doesn't matter how many children she has, if she hears a child calling for help, she will go to it. But as I sat perfectly still with my back against a tree, sweat tickling my cheeks on the humid July afternoon, I wondered if the turkey would really fall for it.

The call echoed through the woods over and over, till I was convinced I'd never get the sound out of my head. Soon, though, I heard the mother clucking to her "lost poult." All of a sudden, there she was, heading right toward me, with a single poult close behind. I held my breath and moved only my eyes as I watched her bob through the forest, her poult's legs moving double-time to keep up.

As she got closer, she suddenly veered off to her right and began moving away from the call, but it didn't matter. I had clearly seen that she had only one poult with her. One poult. This hen had incubated and hatched 13 only four weeks earlier. What had happened to the other 12? Unfortunately, most of the other hens the guys were following lost a high percentage of their poults, too.

It hadn't rained much during the first four weeks of their lives, but yet few poults had survived. According to Mary Jo, during the two years the study was performed, annual survival of hens and poults were lower than average. In 2000, 32 percent of the poults survived, and in 2001, only 20-23 percent lived past four weeks of age. The normal survival rate for poults in the



DOUG LITTLE uses telemetry to get close to a hen and her poults. Once a spot is chosen, **PATRICK BOWEN** plays a recording of a lost poult to bring the hen close enough for her poults to be counted.



rest of Pennsylvania is 40 to 55 percent.

Last year, the cold, rainy spring could explain the low survival rate, but what about this year's warm, dry spring? Weather and predation are factors we have no or little control over, while habitat improvement and hunting are ones we can control. No matter what the factors, low survival rates make it difficult for the turkey population in TMA 7B to improve.

This study will wrap up this month, then the data processing will begin. These results, along with Mark's habitat study, should provide answers to many of these questions.

Watch for a more complete report on the project, once all the results are in and analyzed. In the meantime, to find out more about this study and to follow along the trail with the biologist aides' journals, visit the Game Commission's web site at www.pgc.state.pa.us, and then click on "Wildlife." □

25th



S.R. WILSON

A Happy 25th

By Reverend Thomas Bruner, Jr.

THE GENTLE WHISPER of the breeze in the branches of the old white pine set my mind to wandering — had 25 years really passed?

It was the last day of the 2000 antlered deer season, which also happened to be the first day of the antlerless season. I was hunting in the Bald Eagle State Forest, on Snyder County's Shade Mountain. Except for the faint sounds of a few distant drives, the day, like the season, was passing quietly. And now, with just a few hours of daylight remaining, it seemed increasingly likely that it would stay that way.

The day had started with some promising signs. First, on my early morning drive to link up with my dad, my pulse raced as a buck with high antlers crossed the road just in front of me. And then, just after separating from Dad on the hike to my stand, there was the quick flash of a shooting star off to the west — a promising omen if ever there was one.

At dawn a good bit of shooting echoed through the hollows, but that rapidly dwindled to practically nothing, leaving me alone with the noisy chickadees and the sweep of the wind through the old pine. I turned to study the tree. It was definitely taller and it certainly looked older than when I had first seen it, but then the same could be said of me. I had first stood under its spreading branches as a 14-year-old hunter. How well I could remember the sights, the sounds and the smells — had it really been a quarter of a century?

It was the first day of the 1975 buck season, and my third season hunting whitetails. My first two seasons I had carried my dad's first deer rifle — a trusty Winchester Model 94 .32 Winchester Special. Except for pre-season practice and sighting-in ses-

sions, I had never so much as pulled back the hammer during the seasons. But, by the time my third deer season had rolled around, I had saved enough money from my doing lawn work to buy the rifle of my dreams — a Remington Model 760 .30-06 with a Redfield 2-7x scope.

Before the 1975 opener, Dad and I had chosen my stand: a mature white pine that overlooked a wide bench below. Several deer trails threaded their way through the mountain laurel below and to either side, and Dad would be there to offer guidance and assistance if needed.

After much impatient waiting on my part, that first day dawned clear and cold, with a couple inches of snow coating the ground on the north side of the mountain. Soon after opening time, a doe and two fawns came sneaking up to my left, setting my heart to pounding and making me forget, momentarily, about the cold.

Later, two more does passed on my right, carefully picking their way up the mountain. It was nearly lunchtime when I spotted more movement on my right, this time farther out. It was a lone deer, not following one of the trails, but seemingly making its own way through the brush. I caught glimpses of it through the laurel, but it wasn't until it topped the rise and stood on the same bench as I that my suspicions were confirmed: It was a buck. As he paused to test the wind, I could see two white spikes towering over his ears. And that was the problem. All I could see clearly were the buck's ears and those "Boone &



Crockett” spikes. As the buck resumed his journey up the mountain, his spikes seemed to float atop the laurel, dipping and bobbing, despite my best efforts to get his body in my scope. A head shot seemed risky, and between my racing heart and my heavy breathing, which kept fogging up the scope lens, I was having trouble even seeing the buck’s head. I owed it to myself and to the animal to wait for a good, clean shot — an opportunity that never came. Picking up speed a bit, the buck continued his journey out of sight, leaving in his wake one shaking young hunter. My first opportunity for a buck was gone.

I slumped against the rough bark of the pine tree. I replayed the whole sequence over and over again in my mind. What if I never got another chance at a buck? Was I doomed to be a failure at deer hunting? The white pine offered no answers to my anguished questions, only a soft whisper that seemed, in its own way, soothing. I didn’t see a buck the rest of that year, but on the last day of the extended 1975 antlerless season, I took my first deer — a button buck that had been hit by another hunter farther up the mountain. It would be four more years before I would get my first buck — a

4-point on the afternoon of the rainy opening day in 1979.

The passing years brought many changes — high school graduation, college, marriage, seminary, moves and more moves, two delightful little boys — but most years, in pre-season scouting, if not on the hunt, I would see my old friend, the white pine, and, when I did, I was 14 again, watching my first buck vanish into the brush. That was 25 years ago, and I was a soon to be middle-aged man, with two growing boys soon to take up the hunt.

My reverie was suddenly broken by faint distant sounds. At first, I thought I was hearing a dog barking, but then I realized that it was actually the sound of a group of hunters putting on a drive on the other side of the mountain. Instinctively, I turned to face the sounds, which drifted in and out, depending on the wind. I again thought what a lovely day it was to be alive and hunting, and then I saw a deer about 200 yards away. It was headed down the mountain at a steady pace. As I cranked up my scope to maximum power, I thought about how I might not have noticed the deer at all if it hadn’t been for the snow. I felt the rush of adrenaline because I knew that, for the first time ever, it really didn’t matter whether the deer had antlers or not — both were legal — just as long as I could get a safe, accurate shot. But that

wasn't looking too promising, based on the direction the deer was moving.

As I brought up the gun, I figured the deer was a doe — after all, what was the chance of seeing a buck this late on the last day? Through the scope I picked out antlers, however. Not one for the record books, but antlers well above his ears.

My excitement grew as I glimpsed him through openings in the laurel, and could see that he had slowed a bit and was now angling slightly toward me. I braced myself against the rough bark of the white pine and tried my best to mentally will him into range. And then, as it became clear that the deer really wouldn't get much closer, I glimpsed an opening out ahead about 100 yards away. It would be a long shot for the brushy terrain of Shade Mountain — my longest ever, in fact — but it was definitely a good shot. As he stepped into the opening, I put the crosshairs on his shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The buck dropped in his tracks, and I ejected the spent cartridge, never taking my eyes off of the deer. He was still moving a bit, I could see, but he was definitely down.

I picked my way through the laurel, and when I reached the deer I saw that my shot had hit just a bit higher than I had intended — a quick finishing shot and the buck was mine. I counted eight points, and I noticed that the main beam on the left side had a curious bump and curve in it, apparently the result of some injury when the rack was in velvet. But he was beautiful — a real trophy to me. I knelt down there in the snow by the buck in the fading

light of afternoon, and gave thanks for the deer, for the meat that his death would provide for me and my family throughout the coming year, and most especially for the opportunity to be alive and hunting 25 years after that first buck had outsmarted and outmaneuvered me.

After tagging and field-dressing the buck, I began the drag out to the road. At the time I didn't realize that my 25th anniversary season wasn't over yet. Dad, a senior hunter, had already bagged a small doe a week earlier, but he still had his private land (now discontinued) antlerless license. Since I still had both my regular and private land licenses, we made plans to hunt the remaining two days of the antlerless season. Sure enough, late on Monday morning, I connected on a nice doe to wrap up the season with all the venison we could use in the following year.

Tuesday dawned sunny but windy. Dad and I went out again, but without our guns. This was a day to scout and look ahead to the 2001 season, but especially, to bask in the warm glow of a wonderfully successful deer season. For the first time ever I had bagged both a buck and a doe in the same year. For the first time ever, Dad and I had bagged three deer between us. As we hiked that blustery Tuesday morning, we both agreed that this year had truly been a very happy 25th reunion with the pine tree. □

COVER PAINTING BY TOM GALLOVICH

THIS BUCK has made it through the archery season and the first few days of the regular firearms season. The odds are with him now, as approximately 75 percent of the total harvest is taken on the first couple days of the season. The nearby building suggests that perhaps he's been hiding out where hunters can't get to him. Bucks like this one have a knack for finding those hidden spots or places where you'd least expect to find them. That's whitetail hunting, though, and what makes hunting them so special.



First Buck

By Kevin Oakley

KEIRAN AND I arrived at the Philadelphia airport on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. We were met by Tom and Terry, who drove us to their lovely home. We spent two pleasant days there and then, on Friday, made the 220-mile journey to Bedford County, which was ironic because we're from Bedford Town, England.

We arrived at Tom and Dick's hunting cabin, located halfway up a mountain, and soon discovered that things were quite different here than in England, such as walking in the woods and not seeing a soul. Back home we go hunting extremely early and have to finish by 7 a.m., because after that there are too many people out walking their dogs. I felt totally free in the woods here, enjoying the spectacular landscape and wildlife. Tom and Dick talked about their

experiences hunting bears and deer with firearms and bows, and the stories were stuff I could only dream of.

On opening day, camp members were up early and ready to go. After breakfast we were driven up the mountain and dropped off at our treestands. I had been in my stand for nearly two hours without seeing anything when I heard a shot followed by two more, and then heard one of our group whooping it up.

More shots and shouts were heard throughout the morning, but I still hadn't seen a thing until around noon, when three deer appeared out of nowhere. I didn't dare move and my heart was pounding so hard I thought the deer would hear it. I was disappointed, however, to discover they were all does, and it was back to my vigil. Not long after, seven does filed past, and it was sure exciting seeing so many deer.

In the afternoon I heard Keiran

shouting for help with the deer he had shot, so I climbed down out of my treestand and found him standing over a dandy buck. Then Tom approached and told about his buck and the kills of the other hunters from camp. Only Mike and I had not killed a deer, and I couldn't help but feel I was the odd man out. Tom reassured me that I would get my buck the next day, but I had my doubts.

On Tuesday morning Tom said that the group would drive deer for Mike and me, and after breakfast we were dropped off at two of the most successful opening day stands. The drivers got into position and started through the woods. Not long after the drive had begun I heard two shots from Mike's direction, followed by shouts, and I knew young Mike had his deer. That left only me with an unfilled tag.

A few minutes later I heard a rustling in the leaves and figured it was a squirrel, but I slowly turned my head and spotted a deer with its nose in the air, looking in my direction. I couldn't tell if it was a buck, but then it moved and I spotted antlers. I waited until it moved behind a tree then brought the .30-30 to my shoulder. When the deer stepped into a small opening, I held just behind the shoulder and squeezed the trigger. The buck ran into a thicket, giving me no chance for a second shot. I was devastated.

I sat in my treestand until the drivers

came over, and I directed them to the spot where the deer had stood. We couldn't find a blood trail, and that sinking feeling swept through me again. We followed in the direction the buck had gone, however, and soon found it piled up, shot through the lungs. Now it was my turn to let out a shout. I tagged the buck, and Tom showed me how to field-dress it.

Back at camp I pondered over my good luck. It was my first trip to the states, and the 7-point was my



first white-tailed deer. The camp enjoyed a record year, with 10 hunters taking 10 deer in two days.

I wish to thank Tom and Terry for taking me into their home and making me feel welcome, and Tom and Dick for allowing me to join them at deer camp. I now have memories I'll cherish for the rest of my life. □

Windowpane Buck

By Gary M. Ferrence

I COULD hear the leaves rustle every time the deer moved, but pinpointing its location was another matter. I searched for an opening through the cover but couldn't find one. The deer took two or three bounds and then stopped, and despite not seeing it, I was confident I would spot it at any second. There was no sneaking by today, as it was extremely dry, and along with the drought conditions, the day was extremely warm. Coveralls were out of the question. I wore only a short-sleeved shirt, fluorescent orange vest, light pants and my summer blaze orange hunting cap.

My friend Wayne had directed me to this stand for the last drive before lunch. As I approached the treestand I noted that it was well constructed, with a sturdy ladder, firm flooring and side rails. I unloaded my rifle, attached my safety belt, climbed up into the stand, and then hoisted my rifle up with a rope. I heard the drive begin, and immediately after, heard that crunching of leaves. I finally spotted the deer about 150 yards away. If it stayed on course it would cross below me about 50 yards away. Best of all, it had a respectable rack. I could follow its every move by the dry

leaves, but each time he stopped he was behind a tree or patch of brush. I was convinced he was going to get by without offering a shot.

This hunt really began about eight years earlier, when a group of us attending a potluck dinner started talking about deer hunting. We decided to set aside the first Saturday

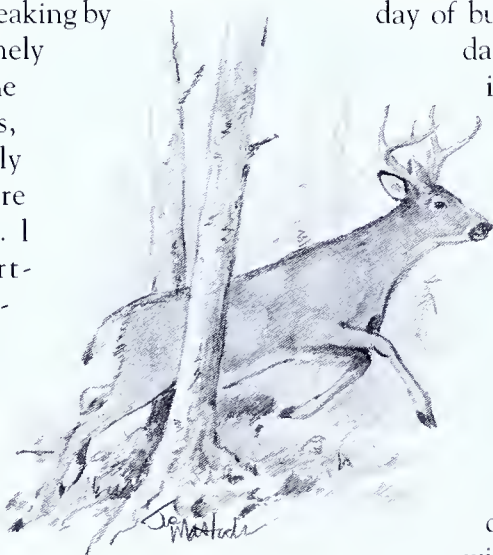
day of buck season as a special day for a group hunt. Jokingly, I suggested that

one of the wives could make us breakfast. To my surprise, all the wives, with mysterious twinkles in their eyes, accepted the challenge, and we were off to a great start. We met at Wayne's home, a historic farmhouse on a dairy farm, and the wives did their magic. We

had all of the sausage, bacon, pancakes, juice and coffee that we could eat and drink. Now that's deer camp.

Over the years it seems it's the drivers, who have already filled their deer tags, who get the best opportunities, and many of the most successful hunts have resulted in no game. As a matter of fact, most of our Saturday hunts have been that way. We haven't made much of a dent in the deer population over the last eight years, but we have had a lot of fun, and to me that's the mark of success.

But what about the wives? After the breakfast feast they pack into a van and



head out to do some shopping. They enjoy that every bit as much as we enjoy our deer hunts, and they usually outlast us, too, and they have accumulated the most “trophies,” too. That this arrangement has continued for eight years is verification that all concerned find it quite satisfying.

As the buck continued to slip away, always seeming to stop behind cover, I finally spied a clearing ahead of it, about 75 yards away. I put the crosshairs on the clearing, and when he was in my field of view I squeezed the trigger. The buck dropped, and I lost sight of him in the thicket, but the next time I saw him he was up and running. He went down over a bench then all was quiet.

I carefully noted where I had last seen the deer, and then unloaded my rifle and climbed down from the treestand. I went to where he had fallen, and when I found a blood trail on the dry leaves I knew he would not be far. As I looked over the edge of the bench I spied him at the bottom. After making sure he was dead I lifted his head to check the antlers and noticed a large section of broken window glass leaning on one side of the rack. The buck had fallen at the edge of an old dump.

After tagging the deer I moved him about 20 feet into a clearing and began the field-dressing chore. I was just about finished when I heard Wayne calling. I told him I got one, and he was down the hill in seconds. He suggested that I drag the buck to a nearby road while he rounded up the other drivers and brought the truck around. After Wayne left I had ample time to ponder the events of the morning, and to take a moment for a more introspective look through the “windowpane.”

The first scene was that of the hunter who had taken the life of an animal. I always feel a touch of remorse when I kill an animal, whether it's a deer or squirrel or chicken or lamb. Having had a rural upbringing, I recognize that humans need to take the lives of other living things in order to survive. Our need for acquiring food at

the expense of other living things is one that we have in common with all animals. At times I've been able to name the animal from which my dinner came from, such as Blackie the steer or Scruffy the lamb. I have done the killing in many instances and cut up the carcasses for the freezer and, ultimately, the pan. I know I have the choice of killing or paying someone else to do the job. Either way, something dies. Even today, I feel that touch of remorse. I hope I never lose that sensitivity.

I wondered how many deer had been seen through the window before it was broken and relegated to the dump. How long had the broken glass been there? How many years will pass before Mother Nature is finally successful in burying the last shards of glass? I really felt it was an undignified setting for the last moments of the magnificent animal at my feet.

Another view reflected the successful hunter — me. I was indeed happy with my 7-point trophy, and taking another look at the rack I noticed that the buck had four points on the right beam, three on the left. Over the years I have shot several 7-point bucks, and all of them have had four points on the right antler beam. Was this just a coincidence or did it serve some purpose?

I got the buck to the road just as the group arrived. After congratulations and a review of the successful drive, we loaded the buck into the truck and headed back for lunch. Because the temperature was in the 60s, the group encouraged me to take the deer home and cut it up.

When I arrived I backed the truck up to the walnut tree in my backyard and hung the deer by its hind legs. As I pulled the hide off I noticed the reflection of a flock of geese in an upstairs windowpane of my house, a most fitting end to my hunt. □



T A N L E Y
STOOD on a
stump to get a
better view of
his little beagle,
Ruby, bringing
round the cot-
rontail. When

The Butcher's Deer

Penn's Woods Sketchbook by Bob Sopchick

the rabbit bounded up a slope he shot and it cartwheeled over the crest. Stanley knelt, holding the rabbit for Ruby to sniff, praising her for her fine work.

While dressing the rabbit, Stanley heard the strident grunting of a buck. A doe trickled through the hollow, followed by a handsome 7-point, like Ruby on a rabbit. Stanley, a butcher by trade, studied the buck as it went by, drawing an imaginary butchering diagram on its form.

"One-twenty-seven on the scale," he said to Ruby who he held under one arm. The beagle squirmed, eager to start hunting again, showing no interest in the deer, knowing that scent as well as any.

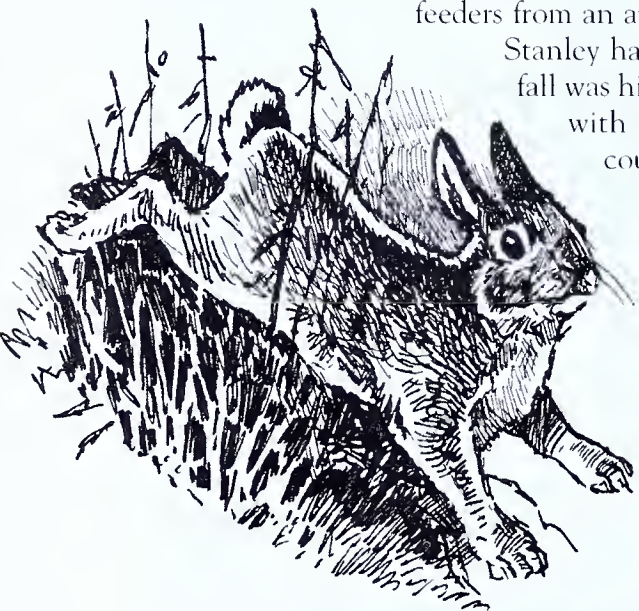
A few minutes later he heard another deer hustling along the same trail. This buck was a bruiser, a 10-point. "One-fifty-three" he whispered, wondering if it was the same buck he had seen behind his shop during the summer. Their shop was a few miles from town. They owned 34 acres out back that wound through a brushy hollow, looped around a hilltop cemetery and ran back out to the highway. Stanley had been seeing lots of deer there, but only a few friends pushed it out each year, writing it off as a good place to run a beagle, but little else. Besides deer, he had seen turkeys and wood ducks and, early one morning, a bear that had pulled down all his suet feeders from an apple tree.

Stanley hadn't hunted deer in more than 20 years, as fall was his busy time. He tried bowhunting once, but with five growing kids and a surging business, couldn't devote enough time for even that. He was satisfied, though, knowing that his work was a vital link between the hunt and the many meals the hunters would enjoy throughout the year.

His father had opened the butcher shop 50 years ago, and Stanley began helping out when he was just a boy. The shop was a family business, and Stanley and his wife, Anna, ran it today, along with their youngest daughter, Jessie, and her husband, Frank.

To Stanley, deer hunting was as much about people as it was about deer, and many of

his customers were close friends. He enjoyed the diversity of hunting traditions in this community, and hearing their personal accounts. There was Pastor Phil and Father Mike who hunted together. They always had their deer processed together and divided it equally. Jack, his mailman, liked to get done early and usually got a deer on the first day of archery. Probably the best of the hunters was his friend Kenny who waited for the big one, and had taken some tremendous bucks over the years. During the last



several years, though, he would bring in a doe on the last day of the late season, always with a hint of resignation in his voice. He would have to finally come down from his treestand, what he called “the best seat in the house.”

When it came to deer, Stanley had seen it all. He could easily recognize the dark mountain deer, the ridge runners, with hooves worn on rocky sidehills, and the big golden farm deer grown fat on corn. Sometimes there was the odd piebald splashed with whitewash, and even an occasional albino. He had seen bucks with short, bristly manes running in a line down their back, and some with double white bibs under their chins. He had processed 3-legged deer, tailless deer, one-eyed deer and deer with torn and missing ears. Some had recovered from unimaginable wounds — impaled by chrome strips from cars that had sideswiped them, and others that had suffered severe punctures in frenzied fights. Most of the bucks were 1½-year-old spikes or forkhorns, but every year there was a big one, the gray-faced buck that made the paper, having lived long enough to grow a decent rack.

Most of all, Stanley enjoyed the young hunters with their first deer, eager to tell their stories. This was an important part of the hunt, too, and Stanley always took time to listen. After the season he sent every youngster a personal note of congratulations, along with a brochure on how to field-dress and care for deer in the field. Some of them now brought their kids to the shop with deer in tow.

Stanley was a stickler for proper field care, and if a hunter didn't do a good job, Stanley let him know it. On occasion, he would show some hunters how to sharpen their knives.

ON THE EVE of the opener, Stanley made sure everything was ready. If the weather cooperated, hunters would start bringing deer in around 8 o'clock, then it would be steady late into the evening. The weatherman called for a cold, partly cloudy morning with increasing clouds and flurries in the afternoon, and this suited Stanley just fine. It was the hot, meat-spoiling temperatures that bothered him.

Opening day they got up at 3:30 and drove down to Deb's Diner for breakfast. Deb was filling coffee cups at the packed counter, and motioned for them to go to the back room. When they walked through the swinging doors the large room was dark, then the lights flicked on revealing a roomful of cheering hunters. A long banner above the buffet table read “HAPPY 50TH ANNIVERSARY — STANLEY'S MEATS.” Everyone was wearing a blaze orange sweatshirt and cap with the shop logo. Stanley stood there slack jawed, Anna with her face in his shoulder.

They were all there, their children, relatives, friends and many regular customers.



Pastor Phil read a wonderful and moving breakfast prayer written by Father Mike, who immediately remarked that he could have read it in half the time, so they could eat and get out in the woods. Tommy, his oldest son, came to the front of the room with a hunting outfit on a hanger, followed by Frank who was holding a rifle.

"Dad, this is for you," said Tommy. "A new hunting outfit and your old .30-06, refinished, with a new scope and sling, tuned up, sighted-in and ready to go. Today, you'll go deer hunting. We want you to have a great day off, and wish you the best of luck always. You're welcome to hunt wherever you like. It's up to you."

Stanley cleared his throat, wiped a tear, and thanked the group profusely. He said that he would most enjoy hunting in back of his place. Just a nice leisurely day.

Jack spoke up, "Aw, he just wants to get up on the hill to make sure everything's moving along down at the shop. Don't let him take any binoculars."

STANLEY TOOK THE road to the picnic pavilion back in the woods and reminisced about the wonderful family picnics, parties and reunions held there. He recalled turning lamb on a spit when he was a boy, while old-timers played accordions and mandolins. He could see his own kids building dams in the summer creek, and could hear the clink of horseshoes down at the pits.

Gray light accrued behind the hill. A cold wind swept through the pavilion, gathering leaves into a spiral that nudged him from his reverie. He set out with the wind in his face and no plan in mind.

The thick woods now void of leaves had opened up and showed deer sign at every turn. He skirted a helix of trails and took a stand on the rise where he had killed the rabbit, hoping a buck would sneak through.

The world seemed far away, and the familiar woods somehow appeared different now that he was looking at it through the eyes of a deer hunter. Geese flew low over the trees, and squirrels and jays complained in his wake. He climbed the opposite side of the hollow and watched the sun rise behind a tattered curtain of dark clouds that ignited in its passage. Stanley relaxed, admiring the sunrise, feeling snug in the new outfit.

He walked quietly along the stream until it turned to black mire, and there put up a woodcock that set down again a short distance away. Soon

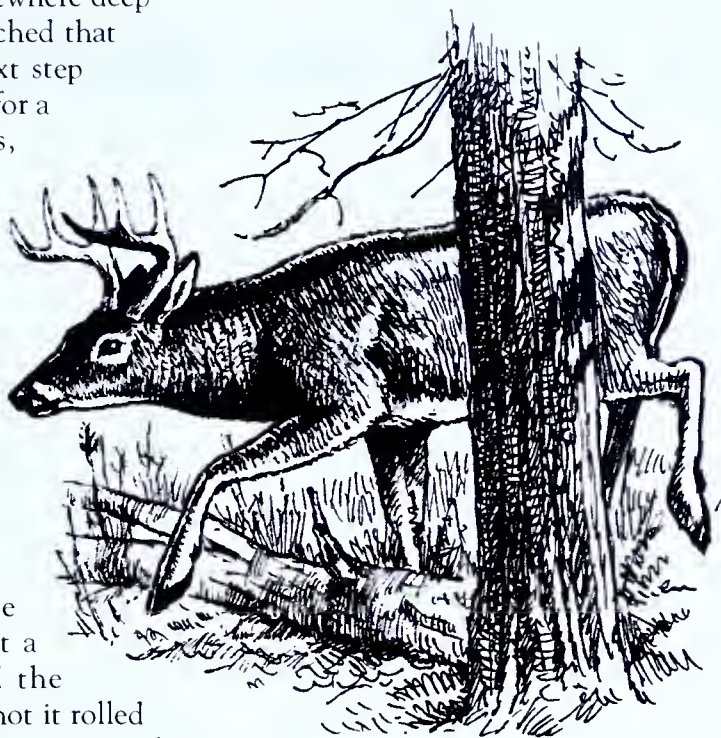
after, he kicked out two deer, but saw only tails. He was excited about the possibility of getting a shot. Stanley had never killed a deer. That was something he never told anyone, nor ever really thought about, until now.

The butcher felt



a wave of vitality rise somewhere deep inside him. His pulse matched that of the woods, and his next step was not that of a man out for a stroll, but the cautious, predatory tread of a hunter.

Stanley still-hunted and posted alternately all day. Late afternoon found him with his back against one of the tall, sentinel oaks surrounding the perimeter of the cemetery. His parents were buried not far behind him, and he knew that today they would be proud. In the next instant a lone buck came around the steep sidehill, and at his shot it rolled down the slope and piled up against a log.



It was the 7-point he had seen several weeks before. Stanley admired the deer a long time. He ran his fingers along the beaded antlers as if reading something of its life or his own there. His deer. He tagged the buck and rolled it over to dress it out, but discovered that he had forgotten his knife. After patting down every pocket he came up empty, and laughed out loud. Here he was, a butcher, a man who made his living with a knife, standing in the woods with his first deer and not so much as the old pocketknife he always carried.

He got back at dusk, slipped a knife from his truck's glove box, and in a few minutes had the buck dressed out. He dragged it around the building and up the delivery alley where several weary hunters were standing in line with their deer.

When he pulled his buck into the shop, Tommy yelled, "Hey everybody, look what this guy brought in." Anna looked up from her clipboard and the crew came into the counter room. "Let's get him up on the scale and see what he weighs."

"116, I'd say," said Stanley. "But I could have sworn he was a lot heavier halfway back the hollow, but that's another story." The needle settled at 112.

"Well, eagle eye, you're about four pounds off, but that's close enough," said Anna.

Stanley pulled a plastic bag from his coat with the heart and liver in it, and set it down on the scale. The needle pegged higher. "Like I said, 116. There's a bigger one running around back there, though."

"Maybe you'll get him next year, Pop," said Tommy.

"Maybe," said Stanley. "Now let me tell you about this deer . . ."





FIELD NOTES



Like a Stonewall

TRAINING SCHOOL — WCO William Vroman and I were checking hunters on the first day of dove season when a shower of birdshot fell all around us. The hunter and I dove for cover, while my training officer barely flinched.

— TRAINEE GLEN CAMPBELL, HARRISBURG

Better Late than Never

BRADFORD — Gary Gee of Ridgebury Township told me that on July 22 he found a hen turkey sitting on a nest of 10 eggs. On July 23 the bird had hatched out nine of the eggs and then left the area with her poults.

— WCO WILLIAM A. BOWER, TROY

Reminiscing

TRAINING SCHOOL — While on field assignment trainees get to work with several officers, and amazingly, on the first day each one says, "Well, you know, when I was a trainee . . ." and always have an interesting story to tell. But, it seems, each officer is also interested in finding out what new subjects we are being taught at the training school.

— TRAINEE BETH FIFE, HARRISBURG

Older than the Hills

CLARION — Several of my deputies and I, along with two State Police officers, cited five individuals for driving on Forest-Game Cooperative land with motorized vehicles and for underage drinking. One of those cited, a 19-year-old, requested a hearing. While testifying, he mentioned an old guy who was at the party, and when we tracked him down he turned out to be 43. District Justice Daniel George and I got a kick out of that because we're both a few years older than that.

— WCO ALAN C. SCOTT, NEW BETHLEHEM

Shameful

ERIE — During dove season I cited a hunter for shooting a Cooper's hawk, on a farm enrolled in our Farm-Game Program. The landowner told me that he watched this hawk hunt every day while he worked his fields and that he will miss the bird. He said that the violator would not be permitted to hunt on his land again. This is a prime example of how hunter behavior determines how much hunting land remains open.

— WCO MICHAEL D. WOJTECKI, MCKEAN



Love/Hate Relationship

INDIANA — I was manning our display at the Indiana County Fair when a man told me how elk tear up the yard at his camp. He said they destroy trees, flowers and shrubs, but then said despite the damage he enjoys seeing them.

— WCO JACK A. LUCAS, BLAIRSVILLE

Foolish

LACKAWANNA — Two men who had been shooting on the 200-yard rifle range at SGL 300 told me that an individual on an ATV drove directly behind the backstop. Fortunately, he wasn't injured.

— DEPUTY ROBERT KRUKOVITZ, OLYPHANT

Having a Bad Hair Day

I got a call about an injured hawk on the roof of a camper at a campground, so I contacted a rehabilitator to check it out. It seems the red-tailed hawk was eating something on a highway in New York when it flew up to avoid oncoming traffic, but not quite high enough to miss the windshield of a motorhome. The bird slammed into it and was thrown upwards and then into the air conditioning unit on the roof. The driver figured the bird was long gone and continued into Pennsylvania. When he got to the campground he noticed the hawk perched atop the motor home. The rehabber climbed up to reach the bird, only to have it shake itself off, gaze around, and then fly off into the sunset. The hawk had been flattened against the windshield, bounced off the air conditioning unit, traveled for 45 miles and missed its lunch, too.

— DISPATCHER DIANE GRIMES, NORTHEAST REGION

Got it Trained Just Right

TRAINING SCHOOL — WCO Scott Tomlinson and I were checking three hunters when, as we were complimenting one on the beautiful drake wood duck he had, watched one of the other hunter's lab stealthily steal the duck and lay it next to its owner, who had just told us he had not bagged anything. The look on the hunter's face when asked "whose duck is that?" was priceless.

— TRAINEE JASON L. DeCOSKEY, HARRISBURG

Big "Bushytails"

I came across a large concentration of acorn cuttings at the base of an oak tree on a game lands in Pike County, and thinking that I had located squirrel heaven, I couldn't wait for the season to open. Food and Cover worker Lenny Boyer later told me that he had passed the same tree before I did and noticed three bear cubs gorging on acorns. I should have known it was too good to be true.

— LMO JOHN C. SHUTKUFSKI, DAMASCUS

Double Value

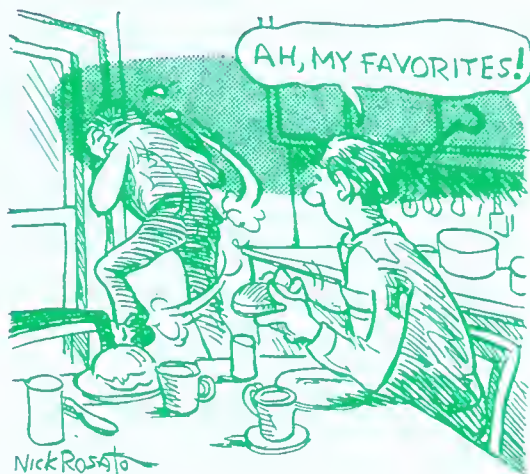
GREENE — At an overnight training session held at Camp Soles in Somerset County, deputy WCOs received instruction in wildlife forensics, rabies specimen handling, and scenerios on game violations. After a long day of training, we all eagerly sought out our bunks, but after several sleepless hours, my deputies trained me in the value of ear protection for a reason other than firearms training.

— WCO RODNEY BURNS, WAYNESBURG

Unbelievable

CLEARFIELD — One day in September trainee John Papson and I noticed some hunters in a vehicle who appeared to be roadhunting. "They couldn't be roadhunting now," John remarked. "They're probably roadhunting for geese," I jokingly replied. Just then a gun barrel poked out of a window and a shot rang out. It turns out the occupants were roadhunting doves.

— WCO DAVID L. STEWART, DuBOIS



Hard to Swallow

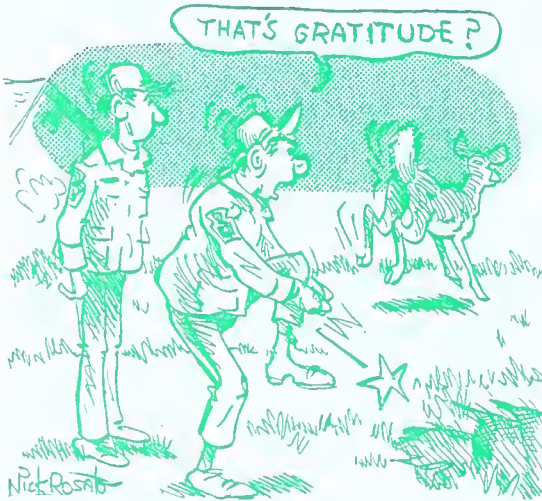
HUNTINGDON — Trainee Ray O'Donnell and I had to examine the stomach contents of a bear killed illegally, and then right after, we returned to my home for lunch. By the expression on Ray's face, I don't think the sloppy joes appealed much to him.

— WCO JOHN ROLLER, HUNTINGDON

Freak Accident

FULTON — I have often heard of deer standing on their hind legs to knock apples from overhead branches, but one landowner told me he had found a deer hanging from its neck in some branches of a tree.

— WCO STEPHEN A. LEIENDECKER, NEEDMORE



Rodeo

ADAMS — Deputy Ron Sadler and I got a call about a deer that had fallen into a well, and when we got to the location we found a little doe standing at the bottom of a 10-foot hand dug dry well. Ron tied a loop in a rope and I guided it around the deer's body. We brought the deer up rear end first, as it kicked wildly, but we were able to release the doe unharmed. Ron did take a hard kick to the shin, however.

— WCO LARRY D. HAYNES, GETTYSBURG

Gymnastics

TRAINING SCHOOL — I was on field assignment in Northampton County when my training WCO and I were asked to respond to a call about a deer on a trampoline.

— TRAINEE AMY B. GLADFELTER, HARRISBURG

Habitat

UNION — One day in her 12x12-foot garden my wife noticed rabbits, praying manises, Japanese beetles, bees, spiders and lots of mosquitoes.

— WCO BERNARD J. SCHMADER, MILLMONT

Strange But True

MONROE — On the first day of archery season I came across a hunter heading back to his vehicle with about 20 minutes of shooting time left. He told me he was taking a break before he went back out. I told him that his break had better be short, because he had only a few minutes left. "What do you mean? Hunting is closed on Sunday, so I have until midnight to hunt, don't I?" he asked. After setting him straight I had to wonder what regulation booklet he had read.

— WCO PETER F. SUSSENBACH, BLAKESLEE

Wrath of the Better Half

HUNTINGDON — Deputy Lanny Cornelius and I were scheduled to do some patrolling, but I was instructed to investigate a case in another part of my district, so I called Lanny's wife and told her I had been "detoured" and wouldn't be able to make it. Several minutes later the phone rang, and it was my very angry wife. Apparently, Lanny's wife had called her and told her she was sorry I was being "deported." (She thought I had said deported instead of detoured.) Seems with the tragic events of September 11, my wife thought I was being called back to active duty. Sorry, Deb, I'll talk more clearly the next time.

— WCO ROBERT A. EINODSHOFER, HUNTINGDON

Good Source

CHESTER — At a Hunter-Trapper Education class at the Oxford Gun Club, Wayne Bramble and his daughter Becky told me that while cleaning out their barn they noticed a large amount of pigeon feathers scattered around. They couldn't figure out what was killing the birds until they noticed a hawk crouching on a beam with a pigeon in its talons. They tried to identify the hawk in a bird identification book but didn't learn it was a Cooper's hawk until they went through their *Game News* and saw it on the February 2001 cover.

— WCO KEITH W. MULLIN, OXFORD



Surprise!

BEDFORD — Last summer, WCO Jim Trombetta and Trainee Kris Krebs were interviewing a man who denied his role in a deer poaching case where a fawn also had been taken. Imagine the look on the man's face when the fawn came scampering around the corner and ran into the house. It seemed as though the fawn was just waiting to be rescued.

— WCO DAN YAHNER, EVERETT

Jaws of Death

During firearms qualification at Scotia Range in Centre County I heard a loud squealing coming from some nearby bushes. I looked around and noticed a meadow vole seemingly stuck halfway out of its hole. I wondered what was wrong until I noticed a weasel had a firm grip on the vole. The squealing ended abruptly.

— LMO STEVEN BERNARDI, PENNS CREEK

Dedication

TIOGA — Deputy WCO Douglas Persing was recently presented with his 25-year pin and the Senior Wildlife Conservation Award for 25 years of dedicated service to the citizens of Tioga County. As if that weren't enough, Doug was also honored with the Outstanding Deputy Award for the Northcentral Region.

— WCO RICHARD J. SHIRE, MIDDLEBURY CENTER

That'll Teach Ya

CLINTON — I wanted to try out my new GPS unit, so I wandered aimlessly into a remote area without paying any attention to direction. After becoming lost I reached into my backpack for the GPS when I realized I had packed my cell phone by mistake. To make matters worse, I was outside of the phone service area.

— WCO JOHN WASSERMAN, RENOVO

Must Have Been the Uniform

FRANKLIN — Deputy Dave Grove and I were investigating a disabled person permit application and were trying to locate the applicant in an apartment complex. The roads were not marked and the addresses were so confusing that we had to ask several people for directions. We finally found the right address, but the person was not home. About an hour later an individual from the same apartment complex called the region office to turn himself in for a violation. The caller said he saw the officers and knew why they were there.

— WCO KEVIN L. MOUNTZ, ST. THOMAS



Alvin!

WYOMING — Wally Dunlap discovered that a chipmunk had taken up residency in the candy machine at work, and he now knows how they got their name. The little guy stayed there for months "chipping" away at the candy bars.

— WCO WILLIAM WASSERMAN, TUNKHANNOCK

Wrong Kind

Wildlife Technician Jon DeBerti and I were taking some members of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation on a tour of habitat projects, with Jon in the leading vehicle and I bringing up the rear. Suddenly the caravan stopped and Jon called me on the radio saying that a bull and some cows were blocking the road. I was thrilled that our group was seeing some elk, but quickly became dejected when I discovered they were cattle.

— LMO COLLEEN M. SHANNON, GRAMPIAN

Pass it On Down

TRAINING SCHOOL — About two years ago I met a young lady who had three generations of family members work for the Game Commission. Her grandfather, Arthur Logue, Jr., served as a deputy with his father, Game Protector Arthur Logue Sr., during the 1930s and '40s. Chauncey Logue, Arthur Logue Sr.'s father, served as a game protector during the 1920s. I find it only fitting that we will be getting married in the spring.

— TRAINEE JONATHAN S. ZUCK, HARRISBURG

Get Involved

SOMERSET — Recently, an individual took the time to call the Southwest Region Office to report a poaching incident. The result was that three deer killed illegally were found at a residence, and including other violations, five defendants were assessed fines totaling \$5,300. Your calls do make a difference.

— WCO BRIAN E. WITHERITE, MEYERSDALE

Lucky Dog

SULLIVAN — LMO Gene Weiner and I attended the Hunters Lake Chapter of Ducks Unlimited banquet and bought a lot of raffle tickets, hoping to win a firearm or art print. As it turned out, I left with a large bag of dog food and Gene with a potted plant. At least our donations went to an excellent conservation organization, and my dog won't go hungry.

— WCO WILLIAM WILLIAMS, LA PORTE



Skunk of a Different Color

MERCER — I got a call about a nuisance skunk digging up a flowerbed, and the lady of the house said she thought it was digging a den. After arriving, however, I determined that the skunk had discovered a nest of yellow jackets and had completely excavated and consumed them, leaving only a few dead bees and scraps of comb as evidence. Instead of being a nuisance, this skunk provided a service to the homeowner.

— WCO DONALD G. CHAYBIN, GREENVILLE

Good Idea

TRAINING SCHOOL — While checking hunters I've been surprised at how many do not carry identification while in the field, even though it's required by law. WCO Steve Hower told me he tells hunters to make a photocopy of their driver's license and put it in their hunting license holder.

— TRAINEE JOHN W. VEYLUPEK, HARRISBURG

Good Service

LYCOMING — I was parked under an apple tree while out on patrol one night when an apple landed on my vehicle and teetered precariously on the edge of the hood. A few minutes later a doe and a fawn came feeding along. Wouldn't you know, the doe came over and ate the apple right off the hood of my vehicle.

— WCO JONATHAN M. WYANT, MONTGOMERYVILLE

Alt offers preview of 2002-03 deer seasons

ANTLER RESTRICTIONS, a regular firearms “doe” season in October, and steps towards a total revision of deer management units are three ideas Dr. Gary Alt is considering as part of the 2002-03 deer seasons and bag limits he will present at the January Commission meeting.

Alt noted that PGC biologists Dr. Matthew Lovallo and Dr. Christopher Rosenberry are working on a Geographic Information System (GIS) map to better define wildlife management units by habitat type; public and private ownership; and human density. The goal is also to draw new units that will be easily recognizable through clear boundaries, such as major rivers and highways.

Once a draft management unit proposal is presented to the Board in January, public input can be gathered, which will take about a year.

Noting the steps taken in 2000 and 2001 toward improving antlerless deer hunting, Alt said that creating an antlerless season for all firearm hunters in October will further those opportunities.

“Taking the bulk of our antlerless harvest in October, before the rut, will result in bucks focusing their breeding on does that will most likely live to give birth to fawns in the spring,” said Alt, “and will lessen the pressure on the habitat by removing the antlerless deer six weeks earlier than under the current seasons.”

Removing antlerless deer in October will also reduce roadkills and property damage.

In promoting antler restrictions, Alt said the agency must recognize the diversity in habitat. Therefore, he is proposing a 3-point on one side restriction (protecting spikes and “Y”s) in the “big woods” area that comprise about two-thirds of the state across the northern tier from the Allegheny National Forest to the Pocono Mountains region and south through the southcentral portion; and a 4-point on one side restriction in the southeastern and western agricultural areas. While still refining the exact boundaries, Alt said that such a restriction should send about 100,000 bucks into the next age class.

“By allowing these bucks to live one more year, based on the antler measurement study conducted last year, we know that more than half of those bucks that survive will have eight or more points in the 2003-04 seasons,” Alt said. “Larger bucks should increase hunter satisfaction.”

Alt said that there were several reasons why he backed off an antler restriction last year, but that actions were taken to justify antler restrictions for the 2002-03 deer seasons.

“If we had implemented an antler restriction last year, we would have saved more than 76,000 bucks,” Alt said. “This increase, adding to an already overly large deer herd, would have further eroded the habitat and would have risked the broad base of support we’ve mustered for our deer management initiatives.”

Over the next three years, the Deer Management Section, in cooperation

with the Penn State University Wildlife Research Unit, plans to place radio-collars or ear-transmitters on 600 bucks to track their movements, determine when they leave their mothers, how far they disperse, how they use and maneuver through private and public lands, their activity during the rut, and their movements during hunting seasons.

"Of all the things we could do to increase the number and quality of bucks, and improve our breeding ecology, I know of nothing that would do it as dramatically as changing our antler restrictions," Alt said.

What does this mean to hunters? In the long term, hunters will most likely see more and larger bucks than they ever have in Pennsylvania. A majority of these bucks that live to age two or older will sport eight points or more.

In addition to these possibilities for the 2002-03 seasons, Alt said the long-range plans for the Deer Management Section include developing ways to gather public input in managing deer populations within the new deer management units and new methods of controlling deer populations in urban/suburban settings.

Looking for great holiday gift ideas?

VISIT www.pgc.state.pa.us, click on "The Outdoor Shop," and check out the many new e-commerce items now available from the Game Commission. Every item is top quality, sure to please every outdoor enthusiast on your shopping list. Items include:

Khaki/Navy Twill Baseball Cap This 6-panel cap is embroidered with the Game Commission logo on the front and has an American flag on the back.

Navy Sweatshirt This heavyweight sweatshirt is preshrunk, 90% cotton and 10% polyester, with a full-color elk imprinted on the left chest.

Navy Cotton Polo Shirt w/Pocket This 100% combed cotton pique polo features a contrasting white birdseye collar and welt rib cuffs. "Pennsylvania Game Commission" is embroidered in white above the left chest pocket and the American flag is located on the right sleeve.

Long Sleeve Denim Shirt This 100% cotton denim shirt has "Pennsylvania Game Commission" embroidered in blue above the left chest pocket and the American flag is on the pocket.

Green Cross Cut Pique Crew Type Sweater This green and grey, 60% cotton and 40% polyester crew has "Pennsylvania Game Commission" embroidered in grey on the left chest.

Mossy Oak Deluxe Woodsman Long Sleeve Shirt This deluxe heavyweight shirt has "Pennsylvania Game Commission" embroidered in khaki above the left chest pocket.

White Ceramic Mug This classic 11-ounce microwave-safe mug features a full-color, high gloss imprint of the Game Commission logo on both sides.

Green AA Mini Mag-Lite This 5¼-inch green Mini Mag-Lite comes in a durable plastic carrying case and patriotic flag sleeve. "Pennsylvania Game Commission – Conserving & Protecting Wildlife" is engraved on the handle.

Stainless Steel Zippo Knife This full-size Zippo Cut-About knife has a 2½-inch blade and is imprinted with the 4-color Game Commission seal on the handle.

Board receives nuisance bear committee report

THE GAME COMMISSION'S Nuisance Black Bear Management Committee submitted to the Board of Commissioners its report offering new options to reduce human-bear conflicts.

As part of its report, the committee concluded that five actions were essential in developing a comprehensive effort to reduce bear-human conflicts:

- Reduce bear numbers in a portion of the Northeast Region by creating a second bear hunting season in Pike, Monroe and Carbon counties during the first week of firearms deer season in 2002;
- Make it unlawful to feed bears statewide;
- Increase public education to promote prevention and awareness of black bear problems;
- Develop negative-reinforcement conditioning and translocation guidelines; and
- Develop a statewide system for recording nuisance bear complaints.

PGC biologist Mark Ternent, chairman of the committee, said some recommendations may be implemented rather quickly. Other options, however, such as expanding bear hunting opportunities, must be considered by the Board early next year. He noted that the additional bear season should reduce the bear population, but safeguards against an over-harvest are in place.

"Not all areas in the northeast are open to hunting or easily hunted," Ternent said. "Holding an additional season one week later than the traditional bear season will provide time for more bears, particularly pregnant

females, to begin denning and become inaccessible to hunters.

Ternent also noted that recent events in Tennessee and New Mexico have given the Game Commission reason for concern here. "Up until last year, we were able to say that there were no known fatalities caused by a black bear in the eastern United States," Ternent said. "However, in May of 2000, two black bears attacked and killed a woman hiking in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee.

"While the Tennessee incident was a result of predatory behavior in the wild, which is extremely rare in black bears, a more recent case in New Mexico was the result of a black bear breaking into a woman's house and killing her. In late August, a Cleveland, New Mexico, woman was found dead in her home, and the autopsy confirmed she was killed by a black bear."

Although New Mexico officials may never know exactly how the incident occurred, home-entry by the bear suggests that habituation may have been a factor.

"Pennsylvanians need to understand that habituating bears to humans can lead to conflicts and the potential for serious injury," Ternent said. "Feeding wildlife, whether the activity is intended for birds or deer, has the potential to attract bears. Once bears become habituated to an area where they find food, they will continue to return, which is when the bear becomes a problem for homeowners and neighbors.

"Capturing and moving bears habituated to humans is costly and

sometimes ineffective. That is why wildlife agencies tell people that a 'fed bear is a dead bear'."

Ternent noted that, according to a national study, of the more than 500 people injured by bears between 1960 and 1980 in North America, 90 per-

cent were the result of bears conditioned to people's food and habituation to human beings. (To review the report, go to www.pgc.state.pa.us and choose "Newsroom," then select "2001 News Releases," and click on "Release #81-01.")

4,700 acres added to SGL system

THE BOARD of Game Commissioners approved 11 land options that will increase the State Game Lands system by more than 4,700 acres. The package included nearly 2,900 acres offered by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and 1,334 acres offered by The Conservation Fund.

Following is a county breakdown of the recent transactions.

Bedford County: 172 acres in Monroe Township, adjacent to SGL 97, from The Conservation Fund for \$68,800.

Butler County: 8 acres in Venango Township, adjacent to SGL 95, from the Ecologically Concerned of Zelienople for \$3,200. The Ecologically Concerned of Zelienople has been an active partner with the Game Commission in land acquisition.

Elk/Jefferson counties: eight parcels totaling 2,177 acres, which will be added to SGL 44 in Elk County and SGLs 54 and 283 in Jefferson County, from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy for \$870,908. As this purchase exceeds \$300,000, the General Assembly and Governor must authorize the acquisition through the capital budget appropriation process. Several of the parcels will eliminate indentures or interiors within the three state game lands, as well as providing protection for the Clarion River corridor.

Huntingdon County: 1,000 acres

in Shirley and Cromwell townships, adjacent to SGL 99, from The Conservation Fund for \$275,000.

Indiana County: 334 acres in Conemaugh Township from the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy for \$76,000. The purchase, which will create a new game lands, SGL 327, includes a reservation on an easement to use a corridor on the property as a non-motorized spur route along the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy's West Penn Trail.

Lawrence County: 7 acres in Plain Grove Township, adjacent to SGL 151, from Waterfowl USA for \$2,800; 4.36 acres donated by Harry Rodgers, et al, in Plain Grove Township, adjacent to SGL 151.

Northumberland County: 45 acres in Shamokin Township, adjacent to SGL 165, from Aurora Enterprises Inc. for \$18,000.

Perry County: 79 acres in Rye Township, adjacent to SGL 170, from the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy for \$31,996.

Westmoreland County: 712 acres in Ligonier and Fairfield townships, adjacent to SGL 42, from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy for \$284,796.

Wyoming County: The Board approved the purchase of 162 acres in Forkstone Township, adjacent to SGL 57, from The Conservation Fund for \$64,800.

Deer hunter surveys approved

THE BOARD of Game Commissioners gave approval for the agency to draw names, addresses and phone numbers of license buyers and successful deer hunters as part of a 3-year study to learn more about Pennsylvania deer hunters and landowners.

"These surveys will be designed to explore relationships between hunter success, as defined by consistently harvesting deer, and time spent hunting and scouting," explained Cal DuBrock, Bureau of Wildlife Manage-

ment director. "Work also will focus on details about their main hunting areas — private or public land, close to home, site fidelity — and hunting techniques. We also will explore why so many hunters do not report harvesting deer, and try to determine hunter attitudes about antler restrictions and other management options."

Anyone who has bought a hunting license or sent in a deer harvest report card since 1995 may be contacted to participate in this survey.

Hunters sharing the harvest

PENNSYLVANIA'S "Hunters Sharing the Harvest (HSH)" program funnels donations of venison to local food banks and soup kitchens. This year under the Game Commission's 2-week antlerless deer season, HSH expects deer meat donations to tip the scales at more than 100,000 pounds.

Through HSH, donated deer meat is given to people in need by local food banks and served in soup kitchens.

Last year, more than 200,000 Pennsylvanians enjoyed nourishing venison meals made from contributions by generous Keystone State hunters who donated nearly 100,000 pounds of venison to food banks.

HSH organizers realized that many more whole deer would be donated if funds were available to process them. For the first time last year, HSH paid meat plant operators for processing whole donated deer which, in some instances, eliminated having hunters foot the processing bill.

More than 60 qualified meat plant operators from across the common-

wealth will participate in the 2001 HSH project by processing and storing venison for food banks.

Payments for this new reimbursement initiative were made with funds received by HSH from the Game Commission and the PA Department of Agriculture. Other supporters include: PA Association of Regional Food Banks, PA Chapters of the Safari Club International, United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania, PA Deer Association, American Crossbow Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, PA Farm Bureau, PA Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Whitetails Unlimited and the Quality Deer Management Association of Pennsylvania.

Individuals can aid the statewide venison donation project by contributing \$1 or more to the "pot." Cash donations will help underwrite processing costs for donated whole deer.

For information on the HSH program and participating meat processors, call 717-367-5223, or e-mail: keystnken@aol.com.

2000 FLINTLOCK DEER HARVEST



GAME NEWS

Conshohocken will enable the company to place up to 12 wells of up to one acre each on SGL 14 in Cameron County. Under the 25-year lease agreement, in addition to creating up to 12 new wells, American agreed to attempt to extract additional gas from two abandoned wells on SGL 14. American will pay the Game Commission 15.625 percent of the market value of natural gas extracted from shallow wells, and 18.75 percent of the market value of natural gas extracted from deep wells. It also will pay an annual rental rate of nearly \$24,000.

- A lease with National Fuel Gas Supply Corporation of Erie for the gas storage ownership and lost revenues dating back to 1935. The lease agreement corrects a situation in which National Fuel has been storing gas under portions of SGL 39 in Venango County and SGL 130 in Mercer County without appropriate authorization. The Game Commission acquired certain portions of these State Game Lands after National Fuel had begun using this underground storage area. Under the lease agreement, National Fuel will provide natural gas to heat several Game Commission facilities, including the Northwest Region Office in Franklin. The lease will result in a \$400,000 savings for the Game Commission over the next 25 years.

In other land management activity, the Board:

- Approved the establishment of a new Cooperative Farm-Game Project with 12 landowners in southwestern Crawford County, totaling 1,070 acres;

- Approved the creation of a propagation area of 100 feet by 100 feet near a parking lot on SGL 205 in Lehigh County. The propagation area will provide a protected area around

a bat condo erected by the Game Commission in cooperation with students from the Lehigh Career and Technical Institute's Career Academy Program;

- Approved a land exchange between the Clay Mine Hunting Club and the Game Commission on SGL 60 in Centre County. The Game Commission will receive 14.2 acres currently owned by the club, which is an extensive abandoned railroad tract that bisects SGL 60. The corridor currently is being used for unauthorized motor vehicle access to the interior of SGL 60. In exchange, the Clay Mine Hunting Club will receive a 10-acre parcel on the perimeter of SGL 60. Under the exchange agreement, the Club may not use the property for commercial purposes, may not subdivide it and may have only one structure situated on it; and

- Approved an agreement between the Game Commission and Ned Dewey regarding rights to the oil, gas, coal, iron ore, limestone and fireclay on a portion of SGL 105 in Armstrong County. When the Game Commission acquired 1,303 acres of SGL 105 in 1933, the deed contained an exception and reservation to these rights. Under the settlement, Dewey will donate 60 acres of land in Armstrong County, along the Allegheny River, which will become part of SGL 105. The Game Commission will recognize Dewey's rights to extract and remove oil and gas granted under the 1933 deed through April 27, 2033, or so long as oil or gas are produced at a minimum of \$500 per year. At such time as the well ceases to produce, all production rights in that well shall cease. Also, Dewey will donate to the agency all surface rights, coal and any merchantable minerals, except for the currently operating mining operations.

Pest control agent regulations revised

THE BOARD of Game Commissioners adopted new regulatory language that clearly defines the application process for and activities of commercial wildlife pest control agents.

Permitted statewide by the Game Commission, pest control agents — for a fee — handle wildlife problems that range from raccoons in the rafters to skunks under the shed. Since the agency began permitting these agents in 1987, no criteria has existed to determine whether applicants were knowledgeable about or capable to perform pest control work.

Pest control agents now must keep records of all activities for at least three years, and file monthly reports with their local WCOs. New applicants will be screened and must take a test.

The revised regulation establishes standards for dispatching animals and the proper disposal of carcasses.

In other action, the board:

- Gave final approval to limit the number of live foxes that may be taken from the wild for the purpose of collecting urine to five and established guidelines for sanitation and housing specifications;

- Gave final approval to require hunters participating in the new special firearms deer season to wear a minimum of 250 square inches of day-light fluorescent orange-colored material on the head, chest and back combined so it is visible 360 degrees. This is the same requirement for regular firearms deer, bear, and elk seasons. In addition, when using a firearm to dispatch legally trapped furbearers during both the regular and special firearms deer seasons, only a 22-caliber rimfire may be used;

- Gave final approval to provide a permit for persons who wish to guide and assist individuals who are hunting or trapping bobcats;

- Gave preliminary approval to a proposal to amend the definition of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) that may be used on State Game Lands by disabled permit holders to read: A Class I ATV or a motorized off-highway vehicle 58 inches or less in width, having a dry weight of 900 pounds or less, traveling on four or more low-pressure tires and having a bench seat. In addition, the ATV must display a valid registration plate issued by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

- Gave preliminary approval to a proposal to limit the number of persons in a party hunting for elk to 25, the same as deer and bear season regulations.

- Gave preliminary approval to a proposal to charge those applying for general hunting or furtaking licenses by mail, fax or over the internet an additional fee based on prevailing first-class postage rates authorized by the Executive Director. For this fee, licenses will be returned to applicants by standard, first-class mail.

- Gave preliminary approval to a proposal to require, on properties where deer control permits have been authorized, that deer control permit signs provided by the Commission be conspicuously posted on boundary lines and along all public roadways traversing the property by the landowner/cooperator. Posting shall be completed prior to February 1.

- Gave preliminary approval to a proposal to allow permitted wildlife rehabilitators to use unlicensed vol-

unteers under their supervision at their facility to provide food and housing for wildlife being rehabilitated. To do so they must maintain current records including name, address and telephone number. In addition, wildlife rehabilitators and those with capture and transportation permits will be required to attend at least one training program or symposium within a 2-year period when this training is made available. When rehabilitated wildlife is used for educational purposes, human contact is not permitted and the wildlife shall be restrained to preclude danger to the public or injury to the specimen. Free

flyng of any species is prohibited. (Preliminary approved proposals must be approved at a subsequent meeting before taking effect.)

- Unanimously approved sending to the Governor's Budget Office a fiscal year 2002 budget, which includes \$2 million for land acquisition and additional monies for habitat improvement. After a thorough review by the Governor's Budget Office, the Governor usually issues executive authorizations for spending prior to the beginning of the next fiscal year, which begins July 1; and

- Set the next meeting for Jan. 13-15, at the Harrisburg headquarters.

Pennsylvania Chapter of The Wildlife Society Frank Felbaum Scholarship

THE PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER of The Wildlife Society is again offering a \$500 scholarship to a Pennsylvania high school senior interested in pursuing a career in wildlife ecology at a college or university.

The recipient should be in the top 50 percent of his or her high school class and have demonstrated a commitment to wildlife through volunteer or work experience. A letter of recommendation from someone who can attest to the applicant's ability and interest is required.

Additionally, the recipient must submit an essay addressing, "Why I

Would Like to Pursue a Career in Wildlife Ecology."

Please include appropriate documentation of class rank and acceptance at a college or university.

The deadline for submission of materials is January 7, 2002. All submissions must include a phone number (with area code) as finalists may be interviewed by telephone. The winner will be notified by February 1, 2002. There is no chance for renewal.

Submit materials to Michelle Cohen, 3490 North Third Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110.

CONTACTING THE REGION OFFICES

Northwest — 877-877-0299

Southwest — 877-877-7137

Northcentral — 877-877-7674

Southcentral — 877-877-9107

Northeast — 877-877-9357

Southeast — 877-877-9470

TIP Hotline: 1-888-PGC-8001. This number is **ONLY** for calls concerning illegal killing of **endangered species** or **multiple big game animals**. All other calls should be made to the appropriate region number above.

Report Card reminder

DEER HUNTERS, don't forget to send in report cards for any and all deer you've taken, or do take in the late archery and muzzleloader seasons, this license year. Report cards provide vital information for our deer management program. Be sure to include the deer management unit and township where the deer was taken, too.

This information is necessary to fully evaluate any change in the current, county deer management unit system. Refer to page 23 of the current *Hunting and Trapping Digest* for a map of deer management units.

If you don't have a big game report card, use or make a copy of the one on page 40 of the *Digest*.

Game News on sale on newsstands

GAME NEWS can now be found on most major newsstands throughout the state and in communities that border Pennsylvania. To go to newsstands, Celtic Moon Publishing, which coordinates the newsstand distribution of the magazine for the agency, recommended title "blurbs" to catch a reader's attention and a UPC code for price scanners on the publication's cover.

More than 70 years old, *Game News* ranks among the most popular state wildlife agency magazines and outdoor magazines in the country. With the expansion to newsstand markets, *Pennsylvania Game News*, will continue to follow its original mission of promoting the state's hunting and trapping heritage, to keep the public informed about the role hunting and trapping play in wildlife management, and to provide a forum for an exchange of ideas about hunting and trapping techniques.

Making this magazine available on

newsstands is just one more step in the Game Commission's ongoing efforts to better serve the public.

Game News began in 1929 as the "Monthly Service Bulletin," which was an in-house newsletter that was mimeographed and mailed to every Game Commission officer. At the time, it was the agency's primary means of communicating with officers in the field.

In 1930, the publication was renamed the *Pennsylvania Game News*, and had a circulation of 1,600. It contained a "Notes from the Field" section, in which officers exchanged information about wildlife and law enforcement. In 1932, it was published in printed form and cost 50 cents a year.

Today, *Game News* covers just about everything related to the outdoors, except fishing and boating. In addition to hunting stories, readers find articles offering updates on Game Commission actions and a variety of

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES who require special assistance at Game Commission public functions should contact the telephone number listed with the announcement, the appropriate region office or the Harrisburg headquarters. Phone numbers for each region are listed in *Game News*; the Harrisburg number is 717-787-4250.

outstanding outdoor columnists, who cover a wide-range of subjects, from natural history and wildlife viewing to archery hunting and firearms. With a circulation of about 120,000, Game News has about 80,000 paid subscriptions. The remaining 40,000 copies are mailed to cooperators in the

agency's Farm-Game, Safety Zone and Forest Game programs; public libraries; outdoor writers; deputy wildlife conservation officers; Hunter-Trapper Education instructors; deer processors; and certain elected officials. A 1-year subscription is \$12, and a 3-year subscription is \$34.50.

Leads sought in bald eagle shooting

THE GAME Commission is seeking information about the illegal shooting of an immature bald eagle found last fall in the vicinity of Gaylord Street, Wyalusing Borough, Bradford County. Bradford County WCO Vernon Perry III is heading up the investigation.

X-rays taken of the injury indicate

a small bullet fragment lodged within the wing of the bird. "In order to solve this case," says Perry, "I am asking the public for help. If anyone knows or hears anything about this illegal shooting, I encourage them to call our region office (877-877-9357). Any information we receive will be held in the strictest confidence."

Alts honored for deer management efforts

DR. GARY ALT and his wife, Sharon, recently were presented with the Pennsylvania Forestry Association's Roe S. Cochran Award for Natural Resource Education.

"This award recognizes those who have created innovative programs to educate individuals about the management and conservation of natural resources in Pennsylvania," said Roy Siefert, PFA president. "For the past two years, Dr. and Mrs. Alt have demonstrated outstanding dedication to educating the public about the Game Commission's new deer management program."

Accompanied by his wife, Dr. Alt has conducted about 150 public presentations around the state in front of more than 50,000 people, in an effort to gain support for the new direction in deer management.

He also has participated in radio

and television programs to get the message out.

"On behalf of Sharon and myself, we are honored to receive this award," Alt said. "The one point I clearly understood was that, in order to move forward, we would need the public's support. Based on recent surveys and comments we've received, I believe hunters are willing to work with the Game Commission to make Pennsylvania deer hunting the best in the nation."

Dr. Alt also recently was presented with the Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation and Audubon Pennsylvania's first Lenny Green/Inky Moore Conservation Educator of the Year Award. Sponsored by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the award was presented to Alt for his dedication to create public awareness about the importance of deer management.

Some things you just have to do yourself to appreciate the whole experience; hunting, for many, is a prime example.

Hunting's a Do-It-Yourself Project

“YOU KNOW what they say about do-it-yourself projects,” said the man behind the counter. “That every do-it-yourself project takes three trips to the hardware store.” He held up his index finger. “That’s number one.”

I was a young bride and I blushed. I gripped my change and the little paper bag of parts, and went out the door.

Just how hard could it be to fix a goose-neck on a kitchen sink? A flood under the sink when I emptied the dishpan clued me

that I had a home plumbing problem. My husband was at work, and I knew he didn’t know any more about repairing drainpipes than I did. The curved pipe — I knew at least they called it a gooseneck — was attached to two straight pipes, spanning the distance between and tightened with collars. Looked simple. Take off the old rusted one and screw on the new one.

I picked out a shiny new metal gooseneck at the local hardware and the threaded collar rings to go with it. That’s when I ran into the smart-alecky clerk.

At home, I emptied the cabinet under the sink, spread out newspaper and old towels, and found a wrench in the basement workbench. It was too small. I went downstairs and found another. Too big. Both were just scraping the flat turning spots (is there a name for them?) on the collar. I needed a different tool.

Back down to the hardware store again, and this time I asked. The clerk politely showed me an expandable, sort-of-wrench that was made exactly to do my plumbing

HUNTING is a do-it-yourself project. This bowhunter will realize plenty of satisfaction if he or she takes the buck that made this big rub.

Bob Steiner



job. I thought he hadn't noticed I was back again, but when I turned to go, he held up two fingers. "That's number two," he said, and smiled.

Now I had the old gooseneck off and the new one on. When I turned on the water, it spurted everywhere underneath the sink. What was I missing? I looked at the old parts. Oh, that white plastic pipe tape to seal the threads. I'd have to go back to the hardware store again. Trip number three.

I made that predictable third trip, but I didn't go back to the same hardware store. I just couldn't face that final smirk.

I felt proud when I showed my husband that evening that I'd taken care of a home repair by myself.

"What did you use to get the old gooseneck off?" he asked.

I showed him the tool I'd bought. He laughed.

"Boy, did you get taken," he said. "I've never seen anything like that before."

I stored those comments away, and when he asked for that tool to fix another gooseneck one day, I was an older and wiser wife and I bit my tongue.

Hunting is also a do-it-yourself project. And yes, the sport requires trips to the store — lots of them. My most satisfying hunts are the ones in which I did everything for myself and came back with the game I was after.

Like the day I carried my portable treestand up the hill and located the deer trail and the buck scrape. I chose the tree I wanted the stand in, calculating wind direction and whether the shooting angle and distance to the trail were good. I placed out the doe estrous scent, did my own antler rattling and grunting, and when the buck came in, I chose the time to release the arrow.

I found the buck myself (he fell quickly), although trailing is a part of bowhunting for which I never turn down good help. I even field-dressed the deer myself. No, I didn't get the buck out of the woods alone.

I would have liked to and I tried, but after a couple of heave-ho's and he'd barely moved, I marked his position with my orange hat and went for more draggers.

Even do-it-yourselfers have to know their limits.

Last year, my first day of rifle season 5-point fell several hundred yards uphill from the road, so I dragged it down myself. It wasn't a huge deer and the rain made the leaves slick, but it felt great to reach the field and be in full view to any passing hunters, getting my deer out without assistance.

I can't count that buck as a complete do-it-yourself project, though. The ground stand location had been recommended to me. It was a place other hunters in our group had shot bucks, but would be vacant that year. It was a shorter walk than my usual stand, and I know I have a tendency to go too far back in sometimes, out of the deer action. So I accepted a little help from my friends.

My do-it-yourself satisfaction last year was in spying the buck in time to get turned around and a steady hold against a tree, so the shot hit home when I fired. Plus there was the drag.

A young friend of ours experienced a do-it-yourself hunt as his graduation into the ranks of adult hunters. His first several years, accompanied by his dad and then other grownups, he was told where to sit and then coached through shots. Later he was placed on stand, but did the watching and shooting by himself. Finally one year he was told, "Okay, you know the area and you know how to find deer. Go do it."

I met him occasionally on that day, the slim figure (but how tall he'd grown!) easing up the hollow toward me, or waving to me from the hillside when I walked past him. Always smiling, a hunter on his own. Then I didn't see him for a while, although I'd heard shooting from his direction. I met him back at the vehicles that evening, and he still had a grin. He showed me his do-it-yourself doe.

"I even dragged it out the whole way myself," he boasted.

His father and another of our group had met him while he was dragging. His dad automatically reached for the rope.

"Wait a minute," said the other hunter. He turned to our young friend. "You found that deer yourself and you shot it, and you've dragged it all this way on your own. You're only a couple hundred yards from the car. We can help you the rest of the way, or you can keep dragging and know you did it all yourself. It's your decision."

He gave his dad his empty rifle, then retightened his grip on the dragging stick and pulled. They walked with him, just in case, but he made it.

Even though experienced hunters can be of real assistance to newcomers in helping them get deer, veterans need to know when to hold back and let the other hunters do it on their own. Or then whose hunt is it?

In our hunting group, my husband is by knowledge of the area, physical ability and personality, often the leader. When a new hunter is with our group, my husband tries hard to get that person a shot at a deer. That often means the visitor spends most of the day on stand, while my husband makes short pushes. I've had to cool his zeal occasionally, when I see a certain bored look in the newcomer's eye.

"Let (our guest) hunt on his own for a

while," I'd say. "Give him a direction and let him hunt through to it, or let him hunt alone the rest of the afternoon."

"But he'll have a better chance of getting a deer if he stays on stand and I drive," my husband says.

"I know that, and you know that," I'd answer, "but you've got to let him do it for himself. Trust me on this."

He's an older and wiser husband, and he often does.

Hunting, of course, isn't all about the best chance at getting game, but largely about the opportunity for a self-made adventure.

Like that home fix-it project, hunting also requires more than one trip to the store for parts and tools. For longtime hunters, going to the sporting goods shop can be a joy, a kid-in-a-candy-store treat where there's lots to browse through and always something to buy.

For a new hunter, that excursion can be as frustrating and embarrassing as my hardware store experience. As a relatively inexperienced muzzleloader hunter, I'm awed by the accessories and trinkets that flintlock shooters use. I buy this and go home and try it, and then buy that, and then go back to the store for something else again.

At least the sporting goods store clerk has the good sense not to count how many times. □

Books in Brief

(Not available from the Game Commission.)

Fascinating Mammals, by Richard H. Yahner, University Of Pittsburgh Press, CUP Services, Box 6525, Ithaca, NY 14851, www.pitt.edu/~press, 333 pp., \$19.95 plus \$3.50 shipping & handling. This book picks up where the standard field guide leaves off. The author provides recent scientific information about mammals in the mid-eastern states, and does it in a way that the layperson can understand, yet also includes technical information that the professional will find useful. Each chapter concludes with one or more in-depth essays covering significant and interesting aspects of the conservation and the ecology of species in that family.

The Naturalist's Eye

By Marcia Bonta

Like a shiny red ornament on a Christmas tree, a cardinal at a birdfeeder against a background of snow warms our hearts on a cold winter day.

Christmas Bird

HE COMES into our feeding grounds early on Christmas Day, and he's resplendent against the snow, glowing like a Christmas light. What is he doing here among his drably suited brethren? Why isn't he in the tropics with the other gaudily attired birds?

At one time the northern cardinal was a bird of the South. John James Audubon knew it as the "cardinal grosbeak" of Louisiana and South Carolina, and declared "in richness of plumage, elegance of motion, and strength of song, this species surpasses all its kindred."

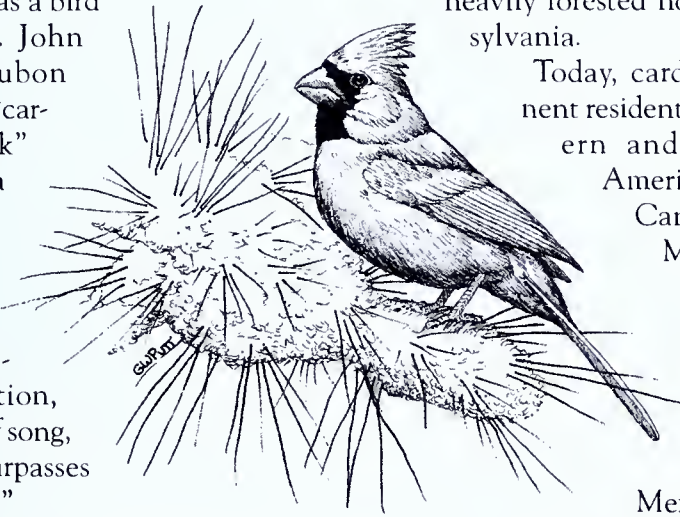
James Lane Allen immortalized it in his book as the Kentucky cardinal, and Virginia claimed it as its own with alternate names such as "Virginia redbird" and "Virginia nightingale." Naturalist/writer Henry David Thoreau never saw it around his Concord, Massachusetts, home, because it wasn't until 1958, nearly a century after Thoreau's death, that cardinals began nesting in Massachusetts.

Here in Pennsylvania, cardinals were common in the southeastern and southwestern corners of the state by the late 1800s. Gradually, they moved north along the river valleys, reaching central Pennsylvania by 1912, Crawford County in 1928, and occupying the rest of the state by 1960, although they are scarce in heavily forested northcentral Pennsylvania.

Today, cardinals are permanent residents throughout eastern and central North America, from southern Canada to southern Mexico, northern Guatemala and Belize and west to Kansas, Oklahoma, and even southern portions of New Mexico and Arizona.

In addition, they were successfully introduced in Hawaii, Bermuda and California. Seven states claim the cardinal as their state bird — Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia.

The cardinal is the quintessential generalist, living successfully in a wide range of habitats heavily impacted by humans. Instead of retreating when eastern forests



were cut, cardinals began moving north, living in dense shrubbery planted in hedgerows and yards, and actually preferring to forage on town and suburban lawns. They also live in shrubby, logged and second-growth forests, shrubby grasslands and marsh edges.

Once the eastern forest cover was removed, the climate became warmer, which also encouraged cardinals to travel north. Then, people started feeding birds in the winter, a final boon to north-moving cardinals, which can survive an average minimum January temperature of five degrees Fahrenheit.

As anyone who feeds birds can attest, they come early in the morning and late in the afternoon on most winter days. The males are dominant, frequently chasing females from food in late fall and early winter. Although many cardinals remain mated for life, they often join flocks of juveniles and adults in early autumn. Membership fluctuates but is usually between five and 20 birds, consisting of equal numbers of males and females. As it gets colder, the size of the flock increases, especially if there is abundant food and cover. Sometimes, cardinal flocks loosely associate with other species, such as dark-eyed juncos, white-throated sparrows, tufted titmice, song sparrows, American tree sparrows and American goldfinches.

Here on our central Pennsylvania mountain, favorite winter cardinal feeding areas are thickets of greenbrier and wild grapevines on sheltered south-facing slopes. No sight is lovelier on a winter day than that of a flock of cardinals against an azure winter sky eating grapes from vines high in the tree canopy.

On cold winter nights, cardinal body temperatures drop three to six degrees, and they roost together in thick shrubbery or conifers to conserve heat. Last winter I realized that a cardinal roost existed in our Norway spruce grove, because on New Year's Day I found a scattering of rosy-pink and gray female cardinal feathers there. I

later flushed a barred owl from the grove and discovered another pile of cardinal feathers. On the eighth of February a third clump of cardinal feathers lay beneath the spruces. Had the culprit been the barred owl?

According to most sources I've checked, the major avian predators on adult cardinals are Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks and eastern screech owls. The latter sometimes kill cardinals on their nighttime roosts. There was also at least one immature sharp-shinned hawk living in or near the grove throughout the winter.

Beside the second clump of feathers, I had noticed fox tracks, one of several mammal cardinal predators, and we had at least two feral cats in the area, still other cardinal killers, along with minks and weasels. As is often the case in the natural world, I could not definitively identify the culprit or culprits. All I knew was that for the first winter ever, after December we had no cardinals at the feeders until early March.

By then cardinals had been singing in the thickets since February 20. The pair that came into the feeders was already well into courtship mode, although I didn't see mate-feeding, an activity in which the male picks up a seed, hops over to the female, and, as she takes the food, they briefly touch beaks. But suddenly the dominant male was solicitous toward the female, and they both sang, as female cardinals sing as well as males. They even engage in bouts of "countersinging," when first one bird, usually the male, sings one phrase several times and then the other matches it. This type of singing is thought to synchronize and unify cardinal couples. When it's practiced between males, it helps to settle territorial disputes over each other's two to 10-acre territory.

Once I even heard what sounded like a version of "countersinging" between a cardinal and a tufted titmouse. On a windy, partly sunny, early March day, I sat beneath a white oak tree on Dogwood Knoll. *Pretty, pretty, pretty*, sang a cardinal. *Peter,*

peter, peter answered a titmouse.

For a few minutes the cardinal triumphed, singing seven *pretty* sequences to the titmouse's one weak *peter*. Then the titmouse got his second wind and delivered a steady barrage of *peters* after every cardinal round. Finally, a second cardinal, probably the female, joined in with *cheer, cheer, cheer*, and the titmouse was vanquished.

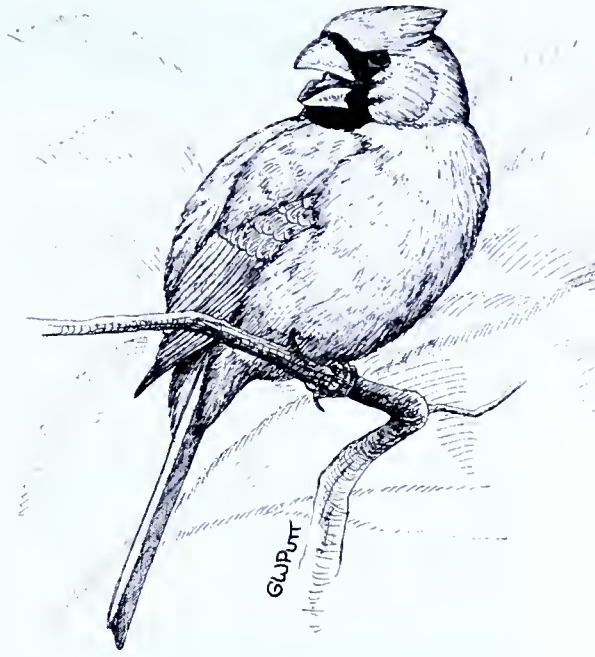
Cardinal song begins in early February and waxes and wanes throughout the breeding period into August. Before new pairings take place, males may sing 150 to 200 or more songs in the dawn light. Females sing mostly before nesting or with the male through nest building. Males continue singing to a lesser degree during incubation by the female, and sing even less when feeding nestlings and fledglings.

That's probably because the male is a busy, involved "husband" and "father," feeding his mate every four or five minutes before nesting and once a minute when she is busy building her nest and laying her brown-speckled, olive-white, three to four eggs. He continues feeding her during the 12- to 13-day incubation period, and is the major provider of food for the nestlings and fledglings.

The female constructs the 4-layered nest of stiff weed stems, leaves and/or plastic, grapevine bark, and rootlets in thick shrubbery, four to seven feet above ground at the edges of woods, in hedgerows or fencerows. Her favorite nesting shrubs are all invasives — Japanese honeysuckle, multiflora rose, and privet — although she will also use dense evergreens and native shrubbery.

The male accompanies her as she builds the nest, probably to protect her from predators and other males that might be interested in a little hanky-panky. The nest building takes as little as three and as long as nine days to finish.

Most cardinal nesting attempts are unsuccessful because of heavy predation on both eggs and nestlings by snakes, small



mammals (particularly chipmunks and squirrels) and birds such as blue jays. But once they fledge, anywhere from 60 to 80 percent survive to adulthood. Fortunately, they have a long breeding period, from April 3 until August 16 in Pennsylvania, so they can produce as many as eight clutches. The cardinals' motto should probably be, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

When the eggs do hatch, the young remain in the nest 10 to 13 days. After fledging, they are dependent on their parents another 40 days. Mostly, they are fed insects, even though the annual diet of cardinals consists of only 29 percent insects and 71 percent fruits and seeds. Cardinals eat at least 85 different insects and 77 plants. They especially like blackberry, raspberry and dogwood fruits, and the seeds of wild grapes, smartweed and bindweed. Other seed sources include sedges, foxtail, vetches, dock, sumac, vervain and tulip trees, as well as corn, oats and oil sunflower. They also like the buds of trees, particularly elm and chokecherry, and they even drink sap from yellow-bellied sapsuckers' tree wells.

Once the young learn to forage for themselves, they disperse, probably no

more than a mile from their parents' territory, although a few banded young have been found as far as 100 miles away. By December they look just like their parents, and as soon as the adults start singing again, the juveniles listen, imitate, and finally learn to sing by April as beautifully as the older adults.

To me, cardinals epitomize a dignified beauty. That's why the great Swedish taxonomist Carl Linnaeus named the bird for red hatted and robed cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church — *Loxia cardinalis*. After several more changes, today its scientific name is *Cardinalis cardinalis* as if to emphasize its aristocratic bearing. To early twentieth century naturalist Neltje Blanchan, the cardinal grosbeak, as she called it, "appears to be a haughty autocrat . . . Bearing himself with a re-

fined and courtly dignity, not stooping to soil his feet by walking on the ground like the more democratic robin, or even condescending below the level of the laurel bushes, the cardinal is literally a shining example of self-conscious superiority — a bird to call forth respect and admiration rather than affection." But bird biographer and ornithologist Arthur Cleveland Bent probably sums up cardinal virtues best by writing that the cardinal possesses a "rare combination of good qualities, brilliant plumage, a rich and pleasing voice, beneficial food habits and devotion to its mate and family."

For more information, the beautifully illustrated *Northern Cardinal* by Gary Ritchison, published in 1997 by Stackpole Books, should satisfy most cardinal admirers. □

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Straight from the Bowstring

By P.J. Reilly

Bow technology has come a long way in the last few years. The \$180 bow of 2001 is lighter, shorter and quieter than the \$500 bow of 1995. Here's what you need to know for . . .

Buying a Bow

SO YOU WANT to become a bowhunter. You want to tackle the ultimate sporting challenge — taking a white-tail with a bow and arrow. You want to take advantage of the long bowhunting seasons. Well then, it all starts with buying a bow.

With all the different types, shapes, sizes and colors of bows available today, taking that first step can be a daunting — make that downright frightening — task. If you've been a bowhunter or target archer for a couple of years and feel it's time to upgrade your tackle, finding your way through the maze of technologically updated bows can be tricky.

Fortunately, for today's archer, there are pro shops throughout the state staffed by people who have the knowledge and the bows you'll need to put your tag on a deer next fall, or to consistently find the 10 ring on the 3-D range. Rob Kaufhold, owner of Lancaster Archery Supply in Lancaster County, has developed a routine when it comes to selling bows to new and more advanced archers that's typical of the service people can expect to find at archery pro shops today. First let's see what Kaufhold recommends for first-time bowhunters.

"The biggest mistake newcomers make is what I call, 'overbowing' themselves," Kaufhold said. "They buy more bow than



PROFESSIONAL instruction is an important aspect of buying a new bow.

they can handle."

When a newcomer walks in Kaufhold's store, Kaufhold's first calculates the buyer's height, arm length, build and age. Those facts are vital to finding the right bow, he said. Generally, Kaufhold recommends a man with an average build, say 5-10, with a 29-inch draw length, start out with a bow that has a maximum draw weight of 70 pounds. For starters, Kaufhold will set that bow in the 60-pound range. For women, kids and older men, Kaufhold recommends a lighter draw weight.

"Spurred on by machismo, many first-timers want bows that draw 80 pounds and can shoot 300 feet per second," Kaufhold said. "Today's bows are much faster than they were even five years ago. A 60-pound bow today is efficient, and plenty fast."

For one thing, today's cam designs produce more speed than the older, round-wheeled bows. Also, the power stroke, that is, the force the string uses to push an arrow, is much more efficient today than it was a few years ago. If you draw a 10-year-old compound bow, you'll feel a slow build to the peak weight, and then a gradual drop-off when you reach full draw. Draw a modern bow and you'll notice a sharp increase in the draw weight immediately, and then a sharp let-off at the very end. This means the string on a modern bow has more force behind it for a greater period of time at the shot.

Kaufhold steers first-time archers toward bows with 70 or 80 percent let-off. He said the high let-off allows the archer to hold the string at full draw for a longer period. The size of a bow a shooter wants is mostly a matter of personal preference. A micro-bow measuring 30 inches from axle to axle is lighter and more maneuverable than a longer, more stable, traditional-sized bow measuring roughly 41 inches long. Kaufhold recommends the micro-bows for turkey hunters or deer hunters who hunt on the ground, because they can be shot comfortably from a seated position. Treestand hunters don't have to worry so much about banging into obstacles, so they can handle longer bows.

Once Kaufhold and a customer have agreed on the amenities, it's time to determine how much the person can spend and pick a specific model. "Most newcomers want to shoot the bow their buddies shoot, or the bow they've read about," he said. "I'll ask them about that and steer them toward that brand."

Familiarity with a particular bow breeds confidence, according to Kaufhold. And confidence in equipment is crucial for the

novice archer. "It takes minutes to learn how to physically shoot, and hours to learn the mental side," he said. "Confidence helps the mental side."

In many instances, cost is the ultimate deciding factor when it comes to buying a bow. Most folks want all the bells and whistles, but if you can't afford them, you'll have to scale back your desire. According to Kaufhold, novice archers can expect to



SOME HIGH-END BOWS have dampeners built into the riser to reduce vibration. As the shock from releasing the string hits the bow, the brass weight in the center of the dampener shifts inside its rubber housing to absorb that shock.

pay anywhere from \$180 to \$400 for a good starter bow today. The advantages of the upper end bows include a quiet action and reduced vibration, and the bows are both easier to tune and stay in tune longer.

"Make no mistake, though," Kaufhold said, "Today's \$180 bows are more than capable of taking game and providing lots of fun on the target range. The \$180 bow of 2001 is lighter, shorter and quieter than the \$500 bow of 1995," he said. "I have no problem putting a \$180 bow in the hands of a new customer."

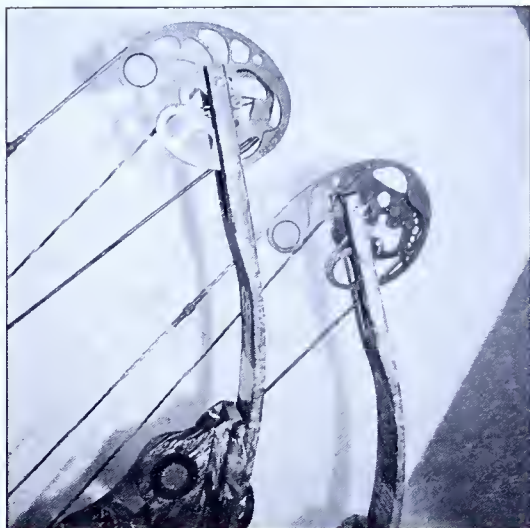
Now that a bow has been selected, Kaufhold turns his attention to accessories. First, he almost always recommends a novice archer start out using a trigger release. "A few years ago, the thinking was that you start someone out shooting fingers and then have them move up to a trigger," Kaufhold said. "That thinking is flawed. It's much easier to learn to shoot with a release, and it prevents a shooter from picking up bad habits from finger shooting."

For the bow, an archer needs a fiber optic sight, an arrow rest and a quiver. As far as arrows go, Kaufhold recommends carbons. "They're lighter, faster and more durable and, believe it or not, they now cost pretty much the same as aluminums," he said. "Aluminum arrows have gone up in price every year the past few years, while carbons have come down."

When the novice has selected a complete outfit, it's time for Kaufhold to take him or her out on the practice range. "We'll go over shooting stance, shooting form, how to aim, how to squeeze the trigger and follow through — everything," he said. "That time on the range helps the shooter build confidence in the equipment, and in us as coaches. New shooters are always amazed to see that after just 20 or 30 shots, they're shooting 5-inch groups at 20 yards, when they didn't think they could hit anything."

Besides first-time bowhunters and target shooters, Kaufhold also helps seasoned archers upgrade their bows. Typically, these archers are looking for any one or a combination of three things — forgiveness, speed and durability. Forgiveness and speed are closely linked. To gain forgiveness, you have to sacrifice some speed. And to gain speed, you have to sacrifice some forgiveness.

A forgiving bow is one that does not require the shooter to do precisely the same thing each time he or she fires an arrow. The bow allows for a small margin of error on the part of the shooter, while main-



ARCHERS can look to cam design for speed and forgiveness. More rounded cams, top, are more forgiving than the more egg-shaped cams, which provide more speed.

taining accuracy.

Forgiveness and speed in a bow come from cam design and brace height, Kaufhold said. Rounded cams are more forgiving than egg-shaped cams, but the egg-shaped cams are designed to provide more speed than the rounded cams.

Brace height is the distance from the bow handle to the string. The shorter the distance the faster the bow, because the closer the string is to the handle, the more time that string spends pushing the arrow. However, the more time the string is in contact with the arrow, the more time there is for the shooter to twitch a muscle and pull or push the bow off target. "Typically," Kaufhold said, "speed bows have a brace height of about six inches, while the more forgiving bows have a brace height around eight inches."

Archers who primarily use their bows to hunt typically want a forgiving bow to counteract the intense physical reaction that occurs when it's time to take a shot at an animal. Conversely, archers who spend most of their time on the 3-D range want fast bows to increase the margin for error in range estimation.

According to Kaufhold, finding a durable bow is the goal of serious archers,

whether they are target archers or bowhunters. "The more you have at stake, the more bulletproof we have to make your equipment," he said. A tournament archer who competes every weekend, or a bowhunter who travels to several states to hunt each year has to know that his or her bow can withstand the abuse of repeated use. Obviously, when talking about a bow's durability, we're talking about the quality of the bow's components. The better they're made, the longer they're supposed to last.

Advanced bows don't come cheap. You have to be prepared to pay for the advantages they offer. Kaufhold said today's ad-

vanced bows run anywhere from \$400 to \$700. The higher end models will have a variety of technologically advanced features such as dampeners built into the handles to reduce shock, or bridge risers that form an arc behind the handle, connecting the upper part of the riser to the lower part, making the handle stiff and super strong. Some manufacturers also offer lifetime warranties for their best bows.

Whether you're a novice archer or a seasoned veteran, buying a bow should be an exciting adventure, not a frightening experience. Stop by your local pro shop and take advantage of the staff's expertise. You'll be glad you did. □

***Fun Games* — By Connie Mertz**

Muzzleloading Musings

Copy the letter at the end of each true statement to complete the phrase below.

1. A gun barrel should be wiped clean before loading. (S)
2. Smokeless powder can be used in muzzleloaders. (U)
3. Never pour powder from the horn directly down the muzzle. (A)
4. The ball needs to be seated firmly in place. (F)
5. It's a good idea to mark the ramrod to be able to tell if the gun is loaded. (E)
6. Antique guns should always be checked by a competent gunsmith before firing. (T)
7. If an "old" muzzleloader is corroded, it can still be fired safely. (N)
8. The best way to learn about shooting muzzleloaders is from an experienced shooter. (Y)
9. There is one basic load for blackpowder shooters. (T)

The key to every hunt is ____ _ ____ _ ____ _ ____ _.

answers on p. 62

Why make your own bullets when there are so many good ones from the factory? One reason is for the feeling of satisfaction when you score with a bullet of your own design and specifications.

Introduction to Bullet Making

THAT'S A strange looking reloading press," a longtime handloading friend said after entering my shop. "It reminds me of the old Belding & Mull No. 28 Straightline press. It doesn't appear to be a regular reloading press at all."

"It isn't a regular reloading press," I answered. "It's a Corbin Silver Press for making bullets."

"You mean you can make bullets at home," he asked with a bit of sarcasm. "I've heard of some pretty weird ideas, but making bullets at home tops all other wild claims I've heard. If you intend to give me some to try, just make them ones that will deliver a one-hole group," he said, while poking me in the ribs with his index finger.

"I have no intentions of giving you any bullets. You wouldn't tell me the truth if they did shoot accurately. On the other hand, giving you a half dozen or so might teach you to put your brain in gear before you wind up your tongue."

He paid no attention to my snide remarks as he scooped up a handful of bullets and dropped them in his shirt pocket. He said his reason for taking them was to have someone test them who knew how to

shoot. As he left, I informed him to put the bullets in the cases with their points sticking out. He simply glared and bowed as he departed.

This fellow was a longtime friend and one of my severest critics. He lived 30 miles or so from my shop and stopped by a half dozen times a year. Mostly to criticize my articles in *Game News* or some other publication that he had read at his local gun club. He was pretty sharp about reloading and shooting, and he had tried his hand at writing a gun column. According to him, he dropped the gun writing idea because of low pay plus the fact that most editors didn't recognize his talents.

A month later, he walked into my office with a paper roll under his arm. A minute or so after the usual barbed remarks we exchanged, he handed me the roll, which contained four targets.

"I thought you might be interested in seeing how a top shooter can shoot good groups even with poor bullets," he said with an air of confidence, "Ordinarily, with match bullets these groups would all be one-holers."

I checked the targets and was surprised to see only one group that measured more



Helen Lewis

CORE SWAGING on the Corbin Silver Press. This smaller press produces the same high quality bullets as the Series II, but is not quite as powerful.

than an inch from center to center of the two widest holes. Several 5-shot groups were well under 3/4-inch.

"I assume these groups were fired with my bullets?"

"You're right, and I might tell you in all honesty that the flier that spoiled the one group was probably my fault."

"I hate to see you have to admit you occasionally do make a mistake, and I've never thought of you as being honest in anything."

He made my day when he asked if I would show him how to make a few bullets on the Corbin Silver Press. I agreed, and an hour later he was cutting cores, swaging them, seating cores in the jackets and point forming the finished bullet. His few turned out to be about three dozen.

Many handloaders feel that making bullets at home is not possible, or they say a homemade bullet can't compare to a factory bullet. Since I'm relatively new in the bullet-making field, I can't say that might have been the case back a few years, but it's certainly not true today. When you

come right down to brass tacks, it's the tools that make the bullet, not the operator. Maybe I should explain that statement. Sure, the operator cuts the cores to several grains heavier than the desired core weight, swages the cores and bleeds off the excess lead so that the core is the exact weight for the bullet being made.

For instance, making a 54-grain .224 bullet would require a raw core weight of 41 grains. The swaging die would be adjusted to bleed off about two grains, making the swaged pure lead core around 39 grains. The .224 jacket weighs 15 grains. I won't go into detail on core swaging and point forming at this time. I'm just pointing out that the bullet maker cuts, swages and seats the cores — the tools do the rest.

It's true that swaging presses and bullet making dies cost significantly more than reloading presses and dies. Corbin's bullet making presses are held to significantly closer tolerances than conventional reloading presses. Also, a bullet making press generates thousands of pounds more pressure than a reloading press. In all honesty, there is a wide chasm between the two.

This brings up the question of why go to all the expense and labor to make bullets at home when excellent bullets are available at the nearest sporting goods store. In other words, the main question is how can the cost of buying equipment and components for home bullet making be justified. This brings up an interesting episode that took place several years ago when I was making bullets on the Corbin Silver Press.

A fairly knowledgeable handloader fired that question at me while watching me seat swaged cores. He simply said, "Lewis, how can you justify the cost of bullet-making equipment when the store shelves are stacked with top quality bullets? Before you dream up an answer, I'll tell you right now

that you don't have a leg to stand on."

"How big is your lawn?"

"I guess about 3/4 acre, but what does my lawn have to do with it?"

"When I was in high school, I mowed our lawn with a push reel-type mower. There was no power except what I exerted on the handle. Fact is, the lawn had to be mowed and raked twice a week to keep the grass low enough for the old reel mower to cut it."

"Don't get off on some tangent. Just answer my question."

"Okay," I shot back. Last week I passed your home, and you were riding a large riding mower complete with a giant grass catcher on the back. I suspect you probably dished out around three grand for the entire outfit. You know as well as I do, a 3/4-acre lawn can easily be mowed with a push type rotary power mower that costs less than \$300. How can you justify spending \$3,000 when a \$300 mower would be more than adequate?"

"Well, you can't measure some things by what they cost," he said as he opened the door to leave.

"That goes for bullet-making tools, too," I said with a nasty grin.

It isn't fair to approach bullet making by just considering the total outlay. Home bullet making offers a new dimension to the handloader. In a recent letter, Dave Corbin, president of Corbin Manufacturing & Supply (Phone: 541-826-5211) said, "in a word, I want to do for handloaders what handloading itself has done for shooters: give them the freedom to experiment with their own loads and selections of materials. Our products simply extend that power of design to the bullet itself, so shooters no longer have to think in terms of just changing the amount of powder or brand of primer to fit some pre-determined weight, style, or construction of bullet. Now the bullet is theirs to develop as they see fit, for better or worse, so they can find out for themselves if a 152-grain bullet shoots better than a 148-grain, instead of

just assuming that 150 grains is the only possible bullet weight between 120 and 180. If tuning the powder charge a grain at a time makes a difference in accuracy, imagine what tuning the bullet weight can do."

Dave also adds some thoughts about the cost of bullet-making equipment. "Those who say swaging cost too much need to take a better look. One swaging die such as our Pro-Swage can replace as many as 500 different bullet moulds, if you consider all the discrete variations of weight and shape you can make and how many moulds it would take to duplicate that."

While it's true you could spend \$500 to \$800 for a top of the line, all-steel roller bearing swage press, self-ejecting die set to fit it, lube, core mould and lead wire, and a supply of bullet jackets, it's also true you can reproduce, or improve upon, factory bullets that cost \$12 to \$24 a box, even if you don't want to get the annual Class 6 Federal Firearms License that makes it legal to sell bullets to the public."

The best way to start bullet making is to contact Corbin for advice. It's imperative to buy a couple of Corbin's swaging manuals. Bullet making is different from general handloading, and the technical books make the learning process easier.

Many home bullet makers admit they should have taken up the hobby years before. It opens new doors to shooting. "You can duplicate what someone else has done, and perhaps save money on the end product, or you can step beyond the limits imposed by mass marketing and develop ideas of your own. Either way, it's the same equipment. The science is fluid dynamics, the art is fluid because it changes with the user's own ideas," Dave Corbin says.

I'm sure not every handloader will be interested, but there is a segment of reloaders who will find the challenges of bullet making rewarding. I can tell you truthfully that there is a hard to describe feeling of satisfaction when you score with a bullet of your own design and specifications. □

In the Wind
By Bob D'Angelo

More than 100 years since their disappearance, elk are once again a part of North Carolina's mountains, as 25 were released near Cataloochee Valley in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Seventy-five elk will be released during a 3-year period.

Answer: True statements: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8.

SAFETY.

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By Betsy Maugans

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Luck of the Fox, Dave Dufford	Nov.
Lost!, T.B.T. Baldwin	Nov.
Honker Heaven, Montco-Style, Amy Francisco	Nov.
Gifts from the Christmas Tree, Chuck Fergus	Dec.

A Happy 25 th , Rev. Thomas Bruner, Jr.	Dec.
First Buck, Kevin Oakley	Dec.
Windowpane Buck, Gary M. Ferrence	Dec.

LMO DIARY, BRAD MYERS	Jan., Feb., Mar.
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MISCELLANEOUS

State Game Lands, Jim Fitser	June
Spanning the Generations, Roland A. Turley	June
West Nile Virus and Wild Turkeys, Bob Eriksen	Nov.

NATURAL HISTORY

Game Drive, Paula Zitzler	Apr.
Lord Baltimore Visits PA, Connie Mertz	May

THE NATURALIST'S EYE, MARCIA BONTA

Under the Spruce Grove	Jan.
Visitors from the River	Feb.
Lion Country?	Mar.
Passing the Torch	Apr.
The Delaware Connection	May
Return of the Whip-poor-wills	June
Theodora Cope Gray	July
Summer's Fiddlers	Aug.
Walking the Lines	Sept.
A Seedy Month	Oct.
Scents & Sensibility	Nov.
Christmas Bird	Dec.

PENN'S WOODS SKETCHBOOK, BOB SOPCHICK

A Reluctant Passage	Jan.
Big Moon Rising	Feb.
Pathfinder	Mar.
A Mountain Chronicle	Apr.
The Cross Fox	May
Forever From Here	June
A Day so Rare	July
The Octagon	Aug.
The Spirit of Autumn	Sept.
The Witness Tree	Oct.
Northern Exposure	Nov.
The Butcher's Deer	Dec.

PGC STAFF WRITTEN

It's All in the Eyes, Chuck Lincoln	Jan.
1999-00 Game & Furbearer Surveys, Chris Rosenberry	Feb.
Bear Check Stations, Larissa Rose	Feb.
Strangers in the Night, William Wasserman	Feb.
The Future is in Our Hands, Roxane Palone	Mar.
North to Nunavik, John P. Dunn	Mar.

Night of the Cougar, William Wasserman	Mar.	Wanton waste charges filed	Jan.
Off to Manitoba, Mark A. Allegro	Apr.	PGC retirees	Jan.
2001 Elk Survey, Rawland D. Cogan	Apr.	PGC continues crackdown on illegal deer killings	Feb.
Woodcock Wing Bee, Larissa Rose	Apr.	Elk meat donated to Salvation Army	Feb.
Urban Wildlife Education, Dan Lynch	Apr.	Outdoor Heritage 2001	Feb.
Fawn Survival in PA, Justin Vreeland	Apr.	Big game scoring sessions on tap	Feb.
To the Arctic Circle and Back, Larissa Rose	May	Annual Report correction	Feb.
Carl Jarrett, Bill Bower	May	Preliminary 2001-02 seasons and bags	Mar.
Pa's Elk Trap and Transfer Project, Rawland D. Cogan, et. al.	May	First elk season in 70 years	Mar.
Turkey Management Area 7B Nesting Update, MaryJo Casalena	May	Schleiden and Palone join commission	Mar.
Wild Sheep Foundation, Dan Lynch	May	Gary Alt seminar schedule	Mar.
Modern-Day Elk Hunt Approved, Rawland D. Cogan	June	Spock elected president	Mar.
Burtons to Antlers, Part 1, Chris Rosenberry	June	Turkey trap-and-transfer to southeast	Apr.
The Right Place at the Right Time, Steve Gehringer	July	Dauphin Co man convicted in deer case	Apr.
Buttons to Antler, Part 2, Chris Rosenberry	July	PGC officers make Governor's Top 20	Apr.
The Elk License Drawing, Rawland D. Cogan	July	Landowners/CREP	Apr.
Big-League Effort, Larissa Rose	July	2000 Youth Essay Contest winners	Apr.
Graveyard Shift, William Wasserman	Aug.	2000-01 deer harvest	May
A Special Place, Larissa Rose	Aug.	58 bobcats taken	May
Elk Habitat Benefits Other Wildlife, Too, Rawland D. Cogan	Aug.	Leads sought in golden eagle shooting	May
Game Farm Tours, Carl F. Riegner	Sept.	Join the online peregrine watch	May
Counting Deer, Chris Rosenberry	Sept.	Concurrent antlered and antlerless seasons approved	June
Pa Elk Hunts: 1920s Style, Larissa Rose	Sept.	Elk hunt approved	June
The Killers, William Wasserman	Sept.	Small game, turkey & furtakers changes	June
AP Canada Geese Banding Studies, Kevin Jacobs	Oct.	2001-02 Seasons & bag limits	June
Wrong Place, Right Time, Mario L. Piccirilli	Oct.	2001-02 Antlerless allocations	June
Wildlife Passages and Highways, Kevin Mixon	Oct.	WCOs tackle unlawful ATV use/ poaching	July
Bears on the Rise, Larissa Rose	Nov.	Elk license applications being accepted	July
Dark Nights and Bright Eyes, Rodney Burns	Nov.	2,100 acres added to SGL system	July
The Sacrifice, Bob D'Angelo	Dec.	Antlerless license applications schedule	July
2000-01 Turkey, Small Game & Furbearer Harvests, Chris Rosenberry	Dec.	Deer hunter survey approved	Aug.
What's Up?, Larissa Rose	Dec.	Home-study hunter education course being developed	Aug.
		520 bobcat permits for 2001-02	Aug.
		Nearly 50,000 acres of private lands for CREP	Aug.
		Eagle numbers soar	Sept.
		Resident geese studied	Sept.
		Task force created to review elk killing	Sept.
		Celebrate NHF Day at Middle Creek	Sept.
		Partnerships work to preserve 160 acres	Oct.
		Game Lands tours	Oct.
		Waterfowl/migratory game bird seasons	Oct.
		Bear Season, Nov. 19-21	Nov.
		Bear Check stations	Nov.
		Big game award winners honored	Nov.
		2001-02 bobcat permits drawn	Nov.
		Alt offers preview of 2002-03 deer season	Dec.
		4,700 acres added to SGL system	Dec.
		Deer hunter survey approved	Dec.
		Hunters sharing the harvest	Dec.
TRAPPING			
Beavers on the Mahoning, Edwin W. Charles	July		
First Fox, Jeremy Castle	Oct.		
CONSERVATION NEWS INDEX			
Licenses now available on Internet	Jan.		

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